ICONOCLASTS

BOOKS BY JAMES HUNEKER

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ICONOCLASTS

A BOOK OF DRAMATISTS

IBSEN, STRINDBERG, BECQUE, HAUPTMANN,
SUDERMANN, HERVIEU, GORKY, DUSE AND
D'ANNUNZIO, MAETERLINCK AND BERNARD SHAW

BY

JAMES HUNEKER

My truth is the truth
MAX STIRNER

NEW YORK
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1909

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TO

JOHN FRANCIS HUNEKER

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I

HENRIK IBSEN

I

THE INDIVIDUALIST

The Kingdom of God is within you

I

Ferdinand Brunetière has declared that "there can be no tragedy without a struggle; nor can there be genuine emotion for the spectator unless something other and greater than life is at stake." This so exactly defines the dramas of Henrik Ibsen that it might have been specifically written to describe their dramatic and ethical content. Whatever else Ibsen's works may be, they are first soul dramas; the human soul is not only their shadowy protagonist, but it is the stake for which his characters breathlessly game throughout the vast halls of his poetic and historic plays and within those modern middle-class apartments, where the atmosphere seems rarefied by the intensity of the struggle. "Greater than life" means for Ibsen the immortal soul — immortal not in the theologic, but generic sense; the soul of the species, which never had a beginning and never can have an end. With this precious

entity as pawn on Ibsen's dramatic chess-board, the Brunetière dictum is perfectly fulfilled.

Let us apply to him and his plays a symbol; let us symbolize the arch-symbolist. Ibsen is an open door. The door enacts an important rôle with him. Nora Helmer, in A Doll's House, goes out of the door to her new life, and in The Master Builder, Hilda Wangel, typifying the younger generation, enters to Solness. An open door on the chamber of the spirit is Ibsen. Through it we view the struggle of souls in pain and doubt and wrath. He himself has said that the stage should be considered as a room with the fourth wall knocked down so that the spectators could see what is going on within the enclosure. A tragic wall is this missing one, for between the listener and the actor there is interposed the soul of the playwright, the soul of Ibsen, which, prism-like, permits us to witness the refractions of his art. This open door, this absent barrier, is it not a symbol?

What does Henrik Ibsen mean to his century? Is he dramatist, symbolist, idealist, optimist, pessimist, poet, or realist? Or is he a destructive, a corroding force? Has he constructive gifts—aside from his technical genius? He has been called an anarchic preacher. He has been described as a debaser of the moral coin. He has been ranged far from the angels, and his very poetic gifts have been challenged. Yet the surface pessimism of his plays conceals a mighty belief in the ultimate goodness of

mankind. Realist as he is, his dramas are shot through with a highly imaginative symbolism. A Pegasus was killed early under him, as Georg Brandes says; but there remains a rich remnant of poesy. And may there not be deduced from his complete compositions a constructive philosophy that makes for the ennoblement of his fellow-beings?

Ibsen is a reflective poet, one to whom the idea presents itself before the picture; with Shakespeare and Goethe the idea and form were simultaneously born. His art is great and varied, yet it is never exercised as a sheer play of form or colour or wit. A Romantic originally, he pays the tax to Beauty by his vivid symbolism and his rare formal perfections. And a Romantic is always a revolutionist. Embittered in youth — proud, self-contained, reticent — he waged war with life for over a half-century; fought for his artistic ideals as did Richard Wagner; and, like Wagner, he has swept the younger generation along with him. He, the greatest moral artist of his century, Tolstoy not excepted, was reviled for what he had not said or done — so difficult was it to apprehend his new, elusive method. A polemist he is, as were Byron and Shelley, Tolstoy and Dickens, Turgenev and Dostoïevsky. Born a Northman, he is melancholic, though not veritably pessimistic of temperament; moral indignation in him must not be confounded with the pessimism that sees no future hope for mankind. The North breeds

mystics. Shakespeare would have made his Hamlet a Scandinavian even if the legendary Hamlet and the earlier play had not existed. The brief, white nights, the chilly climate, the rugged, awful scenery, react on sensitive natures like Ibsen's. And then the various strains in his blood should not be forgotten, — Danish, German, Norwegian, and Scotch. Thus we get a gamut of moods, — philosophic, poetic, mystic, and analytic. And if he too frequently depicts pathologic states, is it not the fault of his epoch? Few dramatists have been more responsive to their century.

II

The drama is the domain of logic and will; Henry Becque called it "the art of sacrifices." The Ibsen technic is rather tight in the social dramas, but the larger rhythms are nowhere missing. The most artificial of art forms, the drama, is in his hands a mirror of many reverberating lights. The transubstantiation of realities is so smoothly accomplished that one involuntarily remembers Whistler's remark as to art being only great when all traces of the means used are vanished. Ibsen's technic is a means to many ends. It is effortless in the later plays — it is the speech of emotion, the portrayal of character. "Qui dit drame, dit caractère," writes André Gide. Ibsen's content conditions his form. His art is the result of constraint. He respects the unities of time,

place, action, not that he admires the pseudo-classic traditions of Boileau, but because the rigorous excision of the superfluous suits his scheme. Nor is he an extremist in this question of the unities. Like Renan, the artist in him abhors "the horrible mania of certitude." The time-unit in his best plays ranges from one to two days; the locality is seldom shifted further than from room to garden. As he matured his theatrical canvas shrank, the number of his characters diminished. Even the action became less vivacious and various; the exteriorization of emotional states was substituted for the bustling, vigorous life of the earlier plays. Yet — always drama, dynamic not static.

His dialogue — a spoken, never a literary one — varies from extreme naturalism to the half-uttered sentences, broken phrases, and exclamations that disclose — as under a burning light — the sorrow and pain of his men and women. One recalls in reading the later pieces the saying of Maurice Barrès, "For an accomplished spirit there is but one dialogue — that between our two egos — the momentary ego that we are and the ideal one toward which we strive." The Ibsen plays are character symphonies. His polyphonic mastery of character is unique in the history of the drama; for, as we shall presently show, there is a second — nay, a third — intention in his dialogue that give forth endless repercussions of ideas and emotions.

The mental intensity of Ibsen is relentless.

Once, Arthur Symons showing Rodin some Blake drawings, told the French sculptor, "Blake used literally to see these figures; they are not mere inventions." — "Yes," replied Rodin, "he saw them once; he should have seen them three or four times." Ibsen's art presents no such wavering vision. He saw his characters not once but for many months continuously before, Paracelsus-like, he allowed them an escape from his chemical retort to the footlights. Some of them are so powerfully realized that their souls shine like living torches.

Ibsen's symbolism is that of Baudelaire, "All nature is a temple filled with living pillars, and the pillars have tongues and speak in confused words, and man walks as through a forest of countless symbols." The dramatist does not merely label our appetites and record our manners, but he breaks down the barrier of flesh, shows the skeleton that upholds it, and makes a sign by which we recognize, not alone the poet in the dramatist, but also the god within us The "crooked sequence of life" has its speech wherewith truth may be imaged as beauty. Ibsen loves truth more than beauty, though he does not ignore the latter. With him a symbol is an image and not an abstraction. It is not the pure idea, barren and unadorned, but the idea clothed by an image which flashes a signal upon our consciousness. Technically we know that the Norwegian dramatist employs his symbols as a means of illuminating the devious acts and

speech of his humans, binding by repetitions the disparate sections and contrasted motives of his play. These symbols are not always leading motives, though they are often so construed; his leit-motiven are to be sought rather in the modulation of character and the characteristic gestures which express it. With Rosmersholm the "white horses" indicate by an image the dark forces of heredity which operate in the catastrophe. The gold and green forest in Little Eyolf is a symbol of what Rita Allmers brought her husband Alfred, and the resultant misery of a marriage to which the man, through a mistaken idealism, had sold himself. There are such symbols and catchwords in every play. In Emperor and Galilean the conquering sun is a symbol for Julian the Apostate, whose destiny, he believes, is conducted by the joyous sun; while in Ghosts the same sun is for the agonized Oswald Alving the symbol of all he has lost, — reason, hope, and happiness. Thus the tower in The Master Builder, the open door in A Doll's House, the ocean in The Lady from the Sea, give a homogeneity which the otherwise loose structure of the drama demands. The Ibsen play is always an organic whole.

It must not be forgotten that Henrik Ibsen, who was born in 1828, — surely under the sign of Saturn! — had passed through the flaming revolutionary epoch of 1848, when the lyric pessimism of his youthful poems was transformed into bitter denunciations of authority. He was

regarded as a dangerous man; and while he may not have indulged in any marked act of rebellion, his tendencies were anarchic — a relic of his devotion to the French Revolution. But then he was a transcendentalist and an intellectual anarch. If he called the State the enemy of the individual, it was because he foresaw the day when the State might absorb the man. He advocated a bloodless revolution; it must be spiritual to compass victory. Unless men *willed* themselves free, there could be no real freedom. "In those days there was no King in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Ibsen confessed that the *becoming* was better than the *being* — a touch of Renan and his beloved *fieri*. He would have agreed with Emerson, who indignantly exclaimed, "Is it not the chief disgrace in the world not to be a unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred of thousand, of the party, the section to which we belong, and our opinion predicted geographically as the North or the South?" Lord Acton's definition that "Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is in itself the highest political end," would have pleased Ibsen. "The minority is always in the right," he asserts.

The Ibsen plays are a long litany praising the man who wills. The weak man must be educated. Be strong, not as the "blond roaming

beast" of Nietzsche, but as captain of your own soul's citadel! Rémy de Gourmont sees the idea of liberty as an emphatic deformation of the idea of privilege. Good is an accident produced by man at the price of terrible labour. Nature has no mercy. Is there really free will? Is it not one of the most seductive forms of the universal fiction? True, answers in effect Ibsen; heredity controls our temperaments, the dead rule our actions, yet let us act as if we are truly free. Adjuring Brand "To thyself be true," while Peer Gynt practises "To thyself be sufficient," Ibsen proves in the case of the latter that Will, if it frees, also kills. Life is no longer an affair of the tent and tribe. The crook of a man's finger may upset a host, so interrelated is the millet-seed with the star. A poet of affirmations, he preaches in his thunder-harsh voice as did Comte, "Submission is the base of perfection"; but this submission must be voluntary. The universal solvent is Will. Work is not the only panacea. Philosophically, Ibsen stands here between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche; he has belief in the Will, though not the Frankfort philosopher's pessimism; and the Will to Power of Nietzsche without that rhapsodist's lyric ecstasy. Nietzsche asked: "For what is freedom? To have the will to be responsible for one's self." Ibsen demonstrates that a great drama must always have a great philosophic substratum. There may be no design in nature — let us believe there is. Gesture is the arrest of the flux,

rendering visible the phenomena of life, for it moderates its velocity. In this hypothesis he would not be at variance with De Gourmont, who has not hesitated to ask whether intelligence itself is not an accident in the creative processes, and if it really be the goal toward which mankind finally believes itself drifting.

There is the mystic as well as the realistic chord in the Ibsen drama. His Third Kingdom, not of the flesh (Pagan) nor of the spirit (Christian), yet partaking of both, has a ring of Hegel and also of that abbot of Flores called Joachim, who was a mediæval Franciscan. The grandiloquent silhouettes of the Romantic drama, the mouthers of rhetoric, the substitution of a bric-à-brac mirage for reality, have no place in Ibsen's art. For this avoidance of the banal he has been called a perverter of the heroic. His characters are in reality the bankruptcy of stale heroisms; he replaces the old formula with a new, vital one — Truth at all hazards He discerns a Fourth Dimension of the spirit. He has said that if mankind had time to think, there would be a new world. This opposer of current political and moral values declares that reality is itself a creation of art — each individual creates his picture of the world. An idealist he is in the best sense of the word, though some critics, after reading into the plays Socialism — picture Ibsen and "regimentation," as Huxley dubbed it! — claim the sturdy individualist as a mere unmasker of conventionalism.

How far all this is from Ibsen's intention — who is much more than a satirist! and social reformer — may be seen in his Brand, with its austere watchword, "All or Nothing." A prophet and a seer he is, not a glib socialist exposing municipal evils and offering ready-made prophylactics. The curve of Ibsen's art comprises all these petty minor evils of life, it reaches across the edge of the human soul; while, ardent pilgrim that he is, he slowly mounts to the peaks from which he may see his Third Kingdom. But, like a second Moses, he has never descended into that country of ineffable visions or trod its broad and purifying landscapes.

Max Stirner's radical and defiant egoism, expressed in his pithy axiom, "My truth is the truth," might be answered by Ibsen with the contradictory "Le moi est haïssable" of Pascal. Indeed, an ironic self-contradiction may be gleaned from a study of Ibsen; each play seems to deny the conclusions of the previous one. But when the entire field is surveyed in retrospect the smaller irregularities and deflections from the level melt into a harmonious picture. Ibsen is complex. Ibsen is confusing. In Ibsen there rage the thinker, the artist, the critic. These sometimes fail to amalgamate, and so the artistic precipitation is cloudy. He is a true Viking who always loves stormy weather; and, as Brandes said, "God is in his heart, but the devil is in his body." His is an emotional logic, if one may frame such an

expression; and it would be in vain to search in his works for the *ataraxia* of the tranquil Greek philosopher. A dynamic grumbler, like Carlyle, he eventually contrives to orient himself; his dramas are only an escape from the ugly labyrinth of existence. If his characters are sick, so is latter-day life. The thinker often overrides the poet in him; and at times the dramatist, the pure *Theatermensch*, gets the bit between his teeth and nearly wrecks the psychologist. He acknowledges the existence of evil in the world, knows the house of evil, but has not tarried in it. Good must prevail in the end is the burden of his message, else he would not urge upon his fellow-beings the necessity of willing and doing.

The cold glamour of his moods is supplemented by the strong, sincere purpose underlying them. He feels, with Kierkegaard, that the average sensual man will ever "parry the ethical claim"; and if, in Flaubert's eyes, "man is bad because he is stupid," in Ibsen's "he is stupid because he is bad." "To will is to have to will," says his Maximus in Emperor and Galilean. This phrase is the capstone of the Ibsen structure. If he abhors the inflated phraseology of altruism, he is one with Herbert Spencer, who spoke of a relapse into egotism as the only thing which could make altruism enduring.

Felicity, then, with Ibsen is experience itself, not the result of experience. Life is a huge

misunderstanding, and the Ibsen dramas hinge on misunderstandings — the conflict between the instinctive and the acquired, between the forces of heredity and of environment. Herein lies his preference for the drama of disordered wills. And touching on this accusation of morbidity and sickness, may there not be gleaned from Shakespeare and Goethe many mad, half-mad, and brain-sick men and women? The English poet's plays are a perfect storehouse of examples for the alienist. Hallucination that hardens into mania is delicately recorded by Ibsen; he notes with a surgeon's skilled eye the first slight decadence and the final entombment of the will. Furthermore, the chiefest malady of our age is that of the will enfeebled by lack of exercise, by inanition due to unsound education; and as he fingers our spiritual muscles he cries aloud their flabbiness. In men the pathologic symptoms are more marked than in women; hence the number of women in his dramas who assume dominant rôles — not that Ibsen has any particular sympathy with the New Woman, but because he has seen that the modern woman marks time better with the *zeitgeist* than her male complement.

Will, even though your will be disastrous in its outcome, but will, he insists; and yet demonstrates that only through self-surrender can come complete self-realization. To say "I am what I am," is the Ibsen *credo;* but this "*I*" must be tested in the fire of self-abnegation. To the average

theologian all this rings suspiciously like the old-fashioned doctrine of salvation by good works. The Scotch leaven is strong in Ibsen. In his bones he is a moralist, in practice an artist. His power is that of the artist doubled by the profound moralist, the philosopher doubled by the dramatist; the crystallization in the plays of these antagonistic qualities constitutes the triumph of his genius.

III

The stage is Ibsen's pulpit, but he is first the artist; his moral, as in all great drama, is implicit. He is a doubter; he often answers a question with another question; and if he builds high he also digs deep. His plays may be broadly divided into three phases. First we get the national-romantic; second, the historical; third, the social dramas of revolt. In the first, under the influence of fable and folk-song, Ibsen delved into the roots of Scandinavia's past; then follow the stirring dramas, Fru Inger of Ostraat, The Vikings at Helgeland, The Pretenders, and those two widely contrasted epics, Brand and Peer Gynt. Beginning with The Young Men's League and ending with the dramatic epilogue, When We Dead Awake, the third period is covered. And what range, versatility, observation, poetic imagination, intellectual power! Yet this dramatist has been called provincial! Provincial — when his maiden tragedy, Catilina,

begins B.C. and his epilogue ends the nineteenth century; when his characters are types as well as individuals that exist from South to North. True man of the North, he sought in Italy for his scene of action, his first hero. That his men and women are strongly Norwegian is no imputation of provincialism — Christiania is a world capital, Scandinavia is not a Bœotia. And is not human nature composed of the same soul-stuff the world over? A similar accusation might be easily brought against French, English, and German drama. Not for the sake of the phrase did M. Faguet salute Ibsen as "the greatest psychological dramatist since the time of Racine." And remember that Faguet is a Frenchman loyal to the art traditions of his race, — logic, order, clarity of motive, and avoidance of cloudy dramatic symbolism.

There are at least three factors to be noted in the Ibsen plays — the play *quâ* play, that is, the drama for the sake of its surface intrigue, with its painting of manner and character; the more ulterior meanings and symbolism; and lastly, the ideologic factor, really the determining one. M. Jules Gaultier, a young French thinker, has evolved from the novels of Gustave Flaubert — greatest master of philosophic fiction — a metaphysic which is very engaging. *Bovaryisme* he denominates the tendency in humanity to appear other than it is. This trait has been dealt with by all world novelists and satirists; *Bovaryisme* has elevated it to the dignity of a Universal

Fiction. We pretend to be that which we are not. It is the law of being, the one mode by which life is enabled to vary and escape the typic monotony of the species. It is the self-dupery of the race. We are all snobs of the Infinite, parvenus of the Eternal. We are doomed to dissemble, else perish as a race.

Now, apply the laws of biology to the moral world and you have the perfect flowering of the application in the Ibsen drama. The basic clash of character is that between species and individual. Each drama furnishes an illustration. In Rosmersholm we see Johann Rosmer — the last of the Rosmers, himself personifying the law of heredity — endeavouring to escape this iron law and perishing in the attempt. He drags down with him Rebekka West, who because of her tendency to variability, in an evolutionary sense, might have developed; but the Rosmer ideals poisoned her fresher nature. Halvard Solness, the Master Builder, suffers from his tyrannical conscience — nearly all of Ibsen's characters have a morbid conscience — and not even the spiritual lift of that exotic creature, Hilda Wangel, can save him from his fate. He attempts to go beyond the law and limits of his being, and his will fails. But is it not better to fall from his giddy height than remain a builder of happy homes and churches? From her birth neurotic Hedda Gabler is hopelessly flawed in her moral nature. She succumbs to the first pressure of adverse circumstance. She, too, is

not ripe for spiritual re-birth. Nora Helmer, like Hilda Wangel, like Mrs. Alving, frees herself by her variation from what we, in our ignorance of our own possibilities, call the normal. It is a cardinal doctrine of Ibsen that we alone can free ourselves; help can never come from without. This he demonstrates by his ironical flaying of the busybody reformer and idealist, Greger Werle, in The Wild Duck. Ibsen also presents here the reverse of the Ibsen medal. Ekdal, the photographer, who is utterly worthless, a fantastic liar and masquerader, like Peer Gynt, is not saved by the interference of Werle — quite the contrary; tragedy is summoned through this same Werle's intrusion, and that most pathetic figure, Hedwig Ekdal, might have striven to self-realization had not her young existence been snuffed out by a virtuous lie. Hilda Wangel is the incarnation of the new order, Rosmersholm of the old. And, *les femmes, ces êtres mediocres et magiques*, as Jules Laforgue calls them, the women of Ibsen usually manage to evade the consequences of the life-lie better than the men. The secret is that, nearer nature, they instinctively will to live with more intensity of purpose. Sir Oliver Lodge thinks that the conflict between Free Will and Determinism is because we "ignore the fact that there must be a subjective partition in the universe separating the region of which we have some inkling of knowledge from the region of which we have none." It must be that reservoir of

eternal certitudes for which Maurice Maeterlinck sighs. The unknown, the subliminal forces *là-bas*, have their share in the control of our will, though we may only judge of what we see on this side of the "misty region" of metaphysic. Be this as it may, Ibsen is content to set his puppets acting within the appreciable limits of free will allowed us by our cognition.

If this evolutionary foundation of the Ibsen drama be too deep, there is also the dialogue, externally simple, terse, natural, forcible, and in the vernacular replete with sonority, colour, and rhythm. Yet it is a stumbling-block; beneath the dramatist's sentences are pools of uncertainty. This is the so-called "interior" or "secondary" dialogue. The plays, read in the illuminating sense of their symbolism, become other and more perplexing engines of power. They are spiritual palimpsests, through which may be dimly deciphered the hieroglyphics of another soul-continent. We peer into them like crystal-gazers and see the faint outlines of ourselves, but so seemingly distorted as to evoke a shudder. Or is our ill-suppressed horror in the presence of these haunting shapes of humanity the result of ignorance? The unknown is always disquieting. Hippolyte Taine may be right. "Our inborn human imperfection is part of the order of things, like the constant deformation of the petal in a plant." And perhaps to Ibsen, who is ever the dramatist, the lover of dramatic effects, should be granted the license of the

character painter. To heighten the facts of life is a prime office of the playwright.

But he has widened by his synthesis the domain of the theatre; he has brought to it new material for assimilation; he, in a technical sense, has accomplished miracles by transposing hopelessly undramatic ideas to the boards, and by his indomitable tenacity has transmuted them into viable dramatic events and characters. Every piece of Ibsen can be played; even Peer Gynt and its forty scenic changes. It has been played — with its epic fantasy, humour, irony, tenderness, and philosophy; Peer Gynt, the very picture of the modern inconstant man, his spiritual fount arid, his imagination riotous, his conscience *nil*, rank his ideals, his dodging along the line of least moral resistance, his compromising with every reality of life — this Peer Gynt is the very symbol of our shallow, callous, and material civilization.

In all the conflicting undertow of his temperament and intellect, Ibsen has maintained his equilibrium. He is his own Brand, a heaven-stormer; his own Skule, the kingly self-mistruster, and his own Solness, the doubter of himself cowed by the thoughts of the new generation — personified in August Strindberg and Gerhart Hauptmann. The old and the new meet at a tumultuous apex of art at once grim, repellent, morose, emotional, unsocial, masterful, and gripping. And what an art! What an ant-hill of struggling, impotent humanity he has

exposed! What riches for the comedians — those ever admirable exponents of *Bovaryisme!* They pass us slowly by, this array of Ibsen men and women, with anguish in their eyes, their features convulsed and tortured into revealing their most secret shames by their cruel master. They pass us slowly, this motley mob, with hypnotic beckoning gestures and piteous pleading glances, for their souls will be presently spilled by their implacable creator. Lady Inger, her son dead, her daughter distraught; revengeful Hjördis and bewitched Sigurd; Duke Skule, fearing Hakon's divine right to the throne; Svanhilda freeing Falk as she goes to her martyr marriage with the unloved Gulsted; Brand, a new Adam, sacrificing wife and child to his fetich, "All or Nothing"; fascinating, inconstant Peer Gynt; Emperor Julian, that magnificent failure; the grotesque Steensgard; the whited sepulchre, Consul Bernick; Nora and her self-satisfied Helmer; Oswald Alving and his agonized mother; the doughty Stockmann, who declares that the exceptional man stands ever alone; Gina, the homely sensible, and Ekdal, the self-illusionist; Rebekka West and Johann Rosmer; Ellida Wangel and the Stranger; Hedda and Loevborg; Hilda and Solness; Asta and Rita Allmers; John Gabriel Borkman, his gloomy brows furrowed by thoughts of vengeance, accused by Ella Rentheim, whose soul he has let slip from his keeping; Rubek and Irene, the tragedy of the artist who sacrifices

love for art; and the entire cohort of subsidiary characters, each one personal and alive — is not this small world, this pictured life, a most eloquent witness to the fecundity of the northern Rembrandt! He proclaims that "The Kingdom of God is within you"; Tolstoy has preached the like. But between the depressing quietism of the Russian and the crescent individualism of the Norwegian there lies the gulf separating East and West. Tolstoy faces the past. Ibsen confronts the future.

II

YOUTHFUL PLAYS AND POEMS

Students of Ibsen are deeply indebted to Mr. William Archer, not alone for his translations — colourless though they often are — but also for his illuminative critical articles on the Norwegian master. A comparatively recent one describes Ibsen's apprenticeship and destroys the notion that he owed anything to George Sand. He learned much of his stagecraft from Eugène Scribe, who was the artistic parent of Sardou. But as Mr. Archer wrote in an English periodical: —

If the French are determined to claim some share in the making of Ibsen, they must shift their ground a little. He did not get his ideas from George Sand, but he got a good deal of his stagecraft from Eugène Scribe and the playwrights of his school.

Ideas he could not possibly get from Scribe, for the best of all reasons; but he can be proved to have been familiar, at the outset of his career, with the works of that great inventor and manipulator of situations, from whom there can be little doubt that he acquired the rudiments of dramatic construction. He ultimately outgrew his teacher, even in technical skill, and his later plays, from Ghosts onward, show the influence of Scribe mainly in the careful avoidance of his methods. Nevertheless it was in the Scribe gymnasium, so to speak, that he trained himself for his subsequent feats as a technician.

It is significant of Ibsen's frame of mind in his extreme youth, that his first drama was called Catilina (1850) and devoted to the Roman champion of individual rights, the hater of tyrants. He studied, says his biographer Hans Jaeger, Sallust's Catiline and Cicero's Orations against Catiline; and Vasenius is quoted to the effect that the Catilina of Ibsen is "a true representation of the historic personage" — an opinion in which Jaeger does not coincide. Two women, Aurelia and Furia, who dispute for the possession of the hero, are the two women natures that may be found in nearly all of the dramas. It is not the purpose of this study to dwell long upon the plays not in the regular repertory. Chiefly for the historic retrospect are they mentioned; particularly in the case of Catilina, the first as it sounds the key in which the master works of the poet are generally sounded, the key of individuality,

"the utmost clearness of vision and fulness of power," to employ Ibsen's own words.

Twenty-six poems appeared in a slim volume. They are boyish, one dating from the nineteenth year of the author. They are immature, as might be expected, though charged with pessimism, a youthful Byronism. "He went about Grimstad like an enigma secured with seven seals," said a lady who knew him then.

The Warriors' Tomb; Norma, or a Politician's Love, — this latter a musical tragedy; St. John's Night, need not occupy our time, for the curious Jaeger and Georg Brandes tell all there is to be told. St. John's Night, though unpublished, was produced at the Bergen Theatre, January 2, 1853.

The writer confesses to deep admiration for Fru Inger of Ostraat (1857) and The Pretenders (1864), both translated by Mr. Archer. Dealing as they do with historical figures they must be of necessity interesting to Norwegians. Considered purely as stage plays they appeal, particularly Lady Inger, a Lady Macbeth in her power for evil. Nils Lykke, too, is firmly drawn and is fascinating in his ambitions and debaucheries. There is one big scene in which the pair meet, which does not soon leave the memory. We seem to see in The Pretenders "the Great King's thoughts" of Skule, the germ of Julian's character, so magnificently exposed in Emperor and Galilean. The Pretenders is full of barbaric colour and the shock of arms.

Some episodes recall in atmosphere those wonderful scenes in Wagner's Götterdämmerung with their hoarse-throated and bloody-minded thanes.

I was lucky enough to be present at the revival of this epical composition at Berlin in the Neues Theatre, October, 1904. Previous to this the Meiningen organization had presented the piece in a worthy manner, and once at the Schiller Theatre there had been a few representations. I was amazed at the power and verisimilitude of Ibsen's characters up to the death scene — rather a theatrical one — of the wicked Bishop Nikolas. After that the action became, because of the weak interpretation of Duke Skule by Franz Wüllner, uninteresting. And then, too, the fatiguing lengths; nearly five hours were consumed in this noteworthy performance. Director Max Reinhardt was a subtly wicked ecclesiastic, Friedrich Kanzler the heroic King Hakon. Die Kronprätendenten, like Wagner's Ring, should be given in sections. At the Neues Theatre it was splendidly mounted, though it is doubtful if it ever will be a popular drama in Germany.

The Feast at Solhaug (1857) was a success when it was played at Bergen. Jaeger says that Olaf Lijekrans, his next but unprinted drama, is more romantic than its predecessor. St. John's Night is redolent of folk-song, and the lyric prevails in nearly all the earlier work;

but prose dominates in the three historical dramas, the third being The Vikings at Helgeland, considered elsewhere.

When Henrik Ibsen celebrated his seventieth birthday, the Berlin Press Society, as an introduction to the celebration, had an Ibsen première, at which his early drama, The Warriors' Tomb, was recited. This piece exhibits him not as the psychological but as the romantic poet, in his twenty-second year. He wrote the work in 1850 while he was a poor student in Christiania. It was written immediately after Catilina, and was performed on the stage at Christiania on September 26 of the same year. When Ibsen became stage manager of the Bergen Theatre a revised version of the play was given, January 2, 1854. A local newspaper printed it as a feuilleton, but every copy of that paper has vanished, and The Warriors' Tomb exists only in two prompter's copies, one in Christiania, the other in Bergen. The latter is the one which he regards as the authorized version.

The piece is in verse and has a good movement and swing in it. It may be called a dramatized ballad, and treats of the last great struggle between Heathendom and Christendom. Students of English history know how the Saxons wiped out Christianity from the Roman provinces they conquered, except in a petty mountainous district in Wales, and how a second wave of invaders ruined the Celtic church of Ireland

and the Celtic church of Iona, and founded an empire in Russia. It seemed indeed as if the men who went to death hoping to drink mead in Valhalla, would drive back those who went to battle hoping to sing hymns among the cherubim. It is with this period of the world's history that Ibsen's juvenile play is occupied.

King Gandalf and his men sail to Sicily to avenge the death of his father, who had fallen in a Viking raid. There the rough wielder of the sword meets the Christian maiden Blanca, and is conquered by her. The word "forgiveness" overcomes him. He has sworn to die or be revenged, so now resolves to die. Then he recognizes in a Christian hermit the father whom he had believed to be dead. He buries only his sword and his Viking spirit in the tomb of warriors.

The language of the piece is decidedly juvenile, and the whole of no dramatic importance, yet it exhibits traces of the dramatic Viking of to-day. In an address delivered at the Press Society's meeting, Dr. Julius Elias points out that it contains another Ibsen motive, "the ethical mission of woman." In the Lady of Ostraat, Ibsen's character, Nils Lykke, says, "A woman is the most powerful thing on earth; in her hands it lies to lead the man where God would have him," and here Gandalf referring to an old saga says:—

> 'Tis said that to Valfather's share belongs
> Only one-half of the slain warrior;

The other half falls into Freia's lot.
This saying I could never understand,
But now I grasp it. A slain warrior
Am I myself — and the best half of me
Belongs to Freia.

And Blanca leads Gandalf where God would have him; by her the rude sea-king has his moral feelings touched, the heathen becomes a Christian, the sea-rover a spiritual champion. She tells him that the Northland that set out over the ocean to conquer the world with fire and sword is called to "deeds of the spirit on the sea of thought."

Dr. Wicksteed in his invaluable lectures on Henrik Ibsen gives his readers some specimen translations in prose of the poem. They deal, in the main, with those themes dear to Tolstoy and Zola, — The Miner, Afraid of the Light, The Torpedo and the Ark, Burnt Ships, The Eider Duck — in this famous lyric as bitter-sweet as Heine's, Ibsen prefigured his own flight from his native land to the South. We are told by some that Ibsen was a man aloof from his country, a hater of its institutions. No man, not even Björnson, has been more patriotic. He has loved his Norway so well that he has seen her faults and has not hesitated to lay on the lash. He loves the people quite as much as Tolstoy his peasants; but he would have them stand each man on his feet. Like Brand he has essayed to lead them to the heights, and never has gone down to their level.

Love's Comedy (1862) is of especial interest to the student of the prose plays. In it are floating, amorphous perhaps, the motives we know so well of the later Ibsen. The comedy is accessible to English readers, for it has been translated by C. H. Herford, with an introduction and notes. Falk and Svanhild part because they fear themselves, — she to marry a rich merchant, he to go his poetic path and attempt to fly against the wind. The cruel satire of the lines stirred all Norway. The paradox of two young folk abandoning each other just because they fear their love will end the way of most married love, is at least a rare one. As much as we admire Svanhild's resolution to remember her love as a beautiful ideal, unshattered by material realization, we cannot help suspecting that sensible old Gulstad's money bags have a charm for her practical bourgeois nature. It is Ibsen and his problem that is more interesting; we see the parent idea of a long line of children, that idea which may be embodied in one phrase, — never surrender your personality. "Nothing abides but the lost" might be a motto for the piece, as Dr. Herford says. Brandes and Wicksteed argue most interestingly from the theme. The young Ibsen had recognized the essential mockery of so-called romantic love, with its silly idealizations, its perplexed awakenings, its future filled with desperate unhappiness. He had the courage to say these things by way of a satirical parable, and there arose upon the air a burden

of disgust and hatred: cynic, atheist, brutal, and shocking. Ibsen bore it as he bore his life long the attacks of press and public — in silence. He could wait, and wait he did.

When Lugné-Poë produced The Comedy of Love at his Théâtre de l'Œuvre, the translation by Mlle. Colleville and F. de Zepelin, Catulle Mendès, who had been quarrelling with M. Poë to the extent of a duel, wrote the following criticism of Ibsen's early work. It illustrates the real Gallic point of view in the Ibsen controversy: —

It seems that sensitive admirers of Henrik Ibsen do not class The Comedy of Love among the masterpieces of the great Norwegian. I am glad of it for the sake of those masterpieces. The thing which is displeasing above everything in this piece, where Ibsen's genius once more halts, is that one is unable to get at the initial intention of the author. What does he pretend to teach by making to evolute and chatter in the garden of a country house — what house I do not know, but for certain it is a matrimonial one — a number of engaged couples, married folks and parsons who are the fathers of a dozen children each? Those who used to love love no more; those who were romantic have become bourgeois; those who are still romantic will become bourgeois. Then there is a poet, whose lyrics we should classify in France — but we are in Lugné-Poë's house! — as provincial, who treats like a Philistine all these poor engaged persons, these engaged lovers, of our everyday life. As for him, being a poet (Heavens! how mediocre his verses must be!) —

he pursues the vague, the immaterial, the sublime. He would like very well to carry with him in this pursuit a young person, once upon a time "poetical," but all the same strongly "practical," who, after inclining for an instant toward a life of devotion and *dévouement* with the poet, does not hesitate to espouse a very rich merchant, who evidently has read Emile Augier, badly translated.

It is with difficulty I discover the object of Henrik Ibsen. This puzzle is, however, very excusable in a French critic, since it is shared by critics of the North. Madame Ahlberg (read Ernest Tissot's book) thinks that Ibsen desires to show the contrast between love and the caricature of it which we see in marriage. Georg Brandes, the celebrated Danish critic, in The Comedy of Love esteems it impossible to know where he would carry the poet, and says, "the only certain thing is his pessimistic conception of love and marriage."

But Henry Jaeger, Norwegian critic, is not even sure of this, and to his mind this piece indicates that there are "sentiments of love, like those of religion; that is to say, which lose in sincerity the moment they are expressed." On which side should a Frenchman have an opinion on points which so divide much nearer judges? At the bottom I am not far from believing that Ibsen premeditated making it understood that even in love all is vanity upon this earth. Ecclesiastes was of this advice, and banality, that gray sun, shines on all the world. Is this to say that The Comedy of Love is a mediocre work? Not at all. Denuded of all dramatic interest, puerile because of its romantic philosophy, and often tedious to the point of inspiring us with

the fear of a never ending yawn, this piece, all the same a dream of youth already virile, agitates in its incoherence, ideas, forces, revolts, ironies, and hopes, which a little later in more sure works, obscure but sure, will be the sad challenges of human personality. And moreover, in the lyrical language of personages too emphatically lyrical, which proceeds from that Suabianism which Heine vanquished, among all the little birds, all the little flowers, all the starlit nights, and other sillinesses of German romance, towers, flashes, and radiates resplendent the ardent soul of the true poet.

III

THE VIKINGS AT HELGELAND

(1858)

With Dr. P. H. Wicksteed's affirmation, "Ibsen is a poet," humming in my ears, I went to the most beautiful theatre in London, the Imperial, to hear, to see, above all to see, the Norwegian dramatist's Vikings, a few days before it was withdrawn, in May, 1903. For one thing the production was doomed at the start: it was wofully miscast. The most daring imagination cannot picture Ellen Terry as the fierce warrior wife of Gunnar Headman. Once a creature capriciously sweet, tender, arch, and delightfully arrogant, Miss Terry is now long past her prime. To play Hjördis was murdering Ibsen outright.

But the play had its compensations. Miss Terry's son, Edward Gordon Craig, exercised full sway with the stage, lighting, costumes. He is a young man with considerable imagination and a taste for the poetic picturesque. He has endeavoured to escape the deadly monotony of London stage lighting, and, unaided, has worked out several interesting problems. Abolishing foot and border lights, sending shafts of luminosity from above, Mr. Craig secures unexpected and bizarre effects. It need be hardly added that these same effects are suitable only for plays into which the element of romance and of the fantastic largely enter. We see no "flies," no shaky unconvincing side scenes, no foolish flocculent borders, no staring back-cloths. The impression created is one of a real unreality. For example, when the curtains are parted, a rocky slope, Nordish, rugged, forbidding, is viewed, the sea, an inky pool, mist-hemmed, washing at its base. From above falls a curious, sinister light which gives purplish tones to the stony surfaces and masks the faces of the players with mysterious shadows. The entire atmosphere is one of awe, of dread.

With his second tableau Mr. Craig is even more successful. It is the feast room in Gunnar's house. It is a boxed-in set, though it gives one the feeling of a spaciousness that on the very limited stage of the Imperial is surprising. A circular platform with a high seat at the back,

and a long table with rough benches, railed in, make up an interior far from promising. A fire burns in a peculiar hearth in the centre, and there are raised places for the women. Outside it is dark. The stage manager contrived to get an extraordinary atmosphere of gloomy radiance in this barbaric apartment. He sent his light shivering from on high, and Miss Terry's Valkyr dress was a gorgeous blue when she stood in the hub of the room. All the light was tempered by a painter's perception of lovely hues. This scene has been admired very much. For many, however, the third act bore off the victory. A simple space of hall, a large casement, a dais, the whole flooded by daylight. Here the quality of light was of the purest, withal hard, as befitted a northern latitude.

In the last scene of all Mr. Craig wrestled with the darkness and obtained several effects, though none startling or novel.

The Vikings was first planned for verse — a Norse tragedy of fate in the Greek style. But the theme demanded a drastic, laconic prose, with nothing unessential, and, as Jaeger points out, without monologues, or lyric outbursts; the dialogue glows with passion, but the glow never becomes flame or gives out sparks; here are caustic wit and biting repartee, but the fighting is not carried on with light rapiers; we seem to be watching a battle for life and death with the short, heavy swords which the old Vikings used — hatred and love, friendship and vengeance,

scorn and grief — all are as intense as the sagas themselves.

The dramatic poet has been reproached, as his biographer asserts, for "degrading the demigods" of the Völsung Saga into mere Norwegian and Icelandic Vikings of the age of Erik Blodöx — or Bloody Axe. Other critics, again, have commended him for making Vikings out of the Völsung Saga.

Be it as it may, the result is drama of an excellent sort; romantic drama if you will, yet informed by a certain realistic quality. Here again the woman is the wielder of the power, and not the man. Hjördis is the very incarnation of violence, of the lust of conquest, of hate, revenge. She would overthrow kingdoms to secure the man she loved, and that man is only a tool for her passionate ambitions.

The Vikings at Helgeland, then, is not exactly a dramatic paraphrase of the Völsung Saga. Ibsen absorbed the wisdom of the ancients of his race and made of them an organic work full of the old spirit, heroic, powerful, and informed with the harsh romance of the time. This play is not among his greatest, but it is none the less interesting as a connecting link of his youth and early manhood.

Let us follow the piece scene by scene, noting the easy grasp of character, the pithy dialogue, the atmosphere of repressed passion and ferocious cruelty. There are evidences of crude power from first to last. Upon the purple

spotted rocks near the home of Gunnar Headman on the island of Helgeland — in the north of Norway — Sigurd comes up from his two war-ships which lie down in the misty cove. In the person of Oscar Asche — familiar to New York theatre-goers as the appalling Hebraic millionnaire in Pinero's Iris — this Sigurd is a formidable warrior, with hair in two blond plaits, steel-spiked cap, and fighting harness.

He resembled Van Dyck's Siegmund as to girth, and with his big bare arms, his bracelets, sword, and heavy stride, he gave one the impression of clanking grandeur, of implacable phlegm. At once a row begins, for Oernulf of the Fjords, an Icelandic chieftain, bars the passage of the Viking. The pair fight. Fast from ship and cavern pour warriors, and Dagny, the wife of Sigurd. Then hostilities cease. In the young woman Oernulf recognizes a daughter wed without his consent by Sigurd; for this hero, after giving up Hjördis — the foster daughter of Oernulf — to Gunnar, marries Oernulf's real child, Dagny. As already indicated, this scene was managed with remarkable deftness at the Imperial. That sterling actor, Holman Clark, no stranger in America, as Oernulf, carried away the major honours in this stirring episode. His very mannerisms lent themselves to an amiable complicity with the lines and gestures. We soon learn from his words that he means to extort his pound of flesh from Gunnar for carrying off Hjördis. Sigurd pla-

cates him with presents, with assurances of esteem. Dagny pleads for forgiveness, and wins it.

Then enters Kara, the peasant, pursued by the house-carles of Hjördis, and her motive is sounded for the first time in this drama of thwarted love and hate. The wretched peasant has killed a subject of the Queen. She is revengeful. He pleads for his life and is promised protection. Hjördis soon appears. She looks like the traditional Valkyr and is armed with a lance. Her nature is expressed in the cold way she greets her foster sister, Dagny, though her face brightens at the sight of Sigurd.

Violently reproached by her foster father, Hjördis responds in kind. Let Gunnar be weak; let him renew his pact of friendship with Sigurd. *She* owes nothing to Oernulf. He has slain her real father in unfair fight — then she is called a wanton by the angry chieftain and her rage flames up so that the dark rocks upon which they all stand seem to be illumined. Kara, in the interim, has gone away muttering his vengeance; Hjördis, dissimulating, invites all to a great feast in Gunnar's house and departs. Sigurd would go. Dagny mistrusts. At last Sigurd tells his too-long-kept secret. It was he that slew the white bear and won the woman beloved of Gunnar. Dagny is amazed, and after being conjured by her husband to keep precious this story she promises. But she wistfully regards the ring upon her arm,

the ring of Hjördis, plucked from her wrist by Sigurd (the ring of the Nibelungs!). Sigurd bids her hide it, for if Hjördis catches a glimpse of it the deception will be as plain as the round shield of the sun blazing on high. And then — woe to all! The curtains close.

Act II is devoted to the feast and the strange events which happened thereat. Ibsen's magic now begins to work. His psychologic bent is felt the moment after we see Dagny and Hjördis in conference. The mild wife of Sigurd wonders audibly at the other's depression. Why should she bemoan her fate with such a house, a fair and goodly abode? Hjördis turns fiercely upon her and replies, "Cage an eagle and it will bite at the wires, be they of iron or of gold." But has she not a little son, Egil? Better no son at all for a mother who is a wanton, a leman! She recalls with sullen wrath the words of Oernulf. In vain Dagny seeks to pacify her. The older woman is of the race of Titans. She tells with pride the story of the queen who took her son and sewed his kirtle fast to his flesh. So would she treat her Egil!

"Hjördis, Hjördis!" cries the tender-hearted listener. For this she is mocked. Hjördis further tortures her by asking if she has accompanied her husband into battle, into the halls of the mighty. "Didst thou not don harness and take up arms?" Dagny answers in the negative. Gunnar is extolled for his deed, a mighty deed as yet not excelled by Sigurd. The lis-

tener seems on the point of denying this. Hjördis notes her agitation and presses her, but Dagny is faithful to her word; she keeps Sigurd's secret. Then in a burst, almost lyric, Hjördis confesses her love for combat to the sisters of Hilda, the terrible Valkyrs who fly in the sky, carrying dead warriors to Valhall. She loves, too, witchcraft, and would be a witch-wife astride of a whale and skim the storm waves. "Thou speakest shameful things," says the frightened Dagny, and is scoffed at for her timidity.

Gradually the feast begins. The warriors assemble. I cannot say that I admired their costumes, reminding me, as they did, of crazy-quilts. Sigurd and Gunnar enter arm in arm. Egil, the hope of Gunnar's house, has been sent away; his father feared the descent of Oernulf and his men. He now regrets the absence of his boy. Oernulf is not present, but is represented by his youngest son, Thorolf. After the drinking has begun the trouble-breeding Hjördis weaves her spell of disaster. She sets boasting the warriors, forces the hapless Gunnar to describe how he slew the great white bear, and openly proclaims him a better man than Sigurd. Even this breach of hospitality does not embitter the friends. Thorolf, however, is hot, imprudent, and at a chance word from Hjördis is set on fire. Miss Terry, it must be confessed, played this entire scene with great dexterity. Her broken phrases, — for she has not a prolonged

note in her compass, — her scornful mien, her raucous voice, and shrewish gestures were admirable agents for the expression of ill-stifled hate. Taunted beyond his self-control, Thorolf tells the woman that Egil has been kidnapped by Oernulf and his other sons. Instantly she screams that Egil has been slain. Thorolf leaves, swearing that he will be avenged; that, "Ere eventide shall Gunnar and his wife be childless."

At this juncture Gunnar, who has hitherto seemed a lymphatic sort of person, seizes his battle-axe, and, despite Sigurd's word of warning, follows Thorolf and kills him. A moment later enter Oernulf, bearing in his arms the child Egil, happy and unharmed. It is a striking climax. To the father, already bereaved of his other sons, lost in the fight with the treacherous peasant, Kara, for the possession of the child, must be told the terrible news. Thorolf is the apple of his eye, the last of his race. Broken-hearted Gunnar explains. Outraged at the deed caused by Hjördis, the timid Dagny gives her the lie when Gunnar's feat is again nauseatingly dwelt upon. "It is Sigurd who won the woman; look at the ring on my arm!" Amazed, infuriated, Hjördis turns upon her husband. Is it true? Gunnar confesses without shame. Sigurd presses his hand and proclaims him a brave man, though he did not slay the bear. The hall empties and after Dagny — woman-like — triumphantly exults and cries,

"Who is now the mightiest man at the board — my husband or thine?" Hjördis is left to her miserable thoughts. She soon makes up her mind, "Now have I but one thing left to do — but one deed to brood upon; Sigurd or I must die."

These words recall the fatal Siegfrieds-Tod! of Götterdämmerung. Both Wagner and Ibsen followed the main lines of the immortal epic.

If in this act the student, curious of those correspondences which subtly knit together ages widely asunder, discovers a modern tone, he will regain the larger air of the antique North in Act III. It belongs essentially to Hjördis. In the free daylight we discover her weaving a bowstring. Near her, on a table, lie a bow and some arrows. The one soliloquy of the piece begins the act. It is short, pregnant — what is to follow is incorporated in its *nuances*. She pulls at the bowstring. It is tough, well weighted. "Befooled, befooled by him, by Sigurd —" But ere many days have passed —!

Gunnar enters. He has had a bad night. He cannot sleep because of the murdered Thorolf. Then for a few bars of this barbaric music Ibsen relapses into pure Shakespeare. We see Lady Macbeth and her epileptic husband merge into the figures of the fiercer Brynhild and the weaker Gunther. The man is urged on to betray, to slay his friend.

Hjördis lies to Gunnar — as lied, when mad with jealousy, Brynhild to Gunther and Hagen;

but this same Hjördis has hardly the excuse of her bigger-souled sister.

Gunnar weakens. He describes a dream that he has had of late. "Methought I had done the deed thou cravest; Sigurd lay slain on the earth; thou didst stand beside him and thy face was wondrous pale. Then said I, 'Art thou glad, now that I have done thy will?' But thou didst laugh and answer, 'Blither were I didst thou, Gunnar, lie there in Sigurd's stead.'" Ill at ease, Hjördis flouts this dream and pushes her cause to an issue. Sigurd must die. How? "Do the deed, Gunnar — and the heavy days will be past." She promises cheap joys — love. He leaves her clutched to the very heart by her baleful words. The next interview is with Dagny. No trouble now in winging this emotional bird. Already she repents of her cruelty the previous night and would make amends. Hjördis recognizes the malleability of the woman and pierces her armour by proving to her her own unfitness for the high position as wife of Sigurd — now the sole hero. She plays all the music there is hidden within this string, and it sounds its feeble, little, discouraged tune without further ado. Dagny feels her worthlessness, has always felt it; better let Sigurd go unattended, unhampered, and quite alone upon that shining path of glory which surely awaits him. She leaves. Treading upon her heels almost comes the redoubtable Sigurd to this exposed cavern of the wicked. Too soon he falls into the toils, not

because, like Hercules with Omphale, he is merely a sensuous weakling, but because he has loved Hjördis from the first. The plot curdles. Explanations fall like leaves in the thick of autumn. If Sigurd has loved, Hjördis has anticipated him. This eagle bends curved beak and is of the lowly for the moment. She proves to Sigurd that the one unpardonable sin is the repudiation of love.

For another and a nobler motive Sigurd gives place to his beloved friend Gunnar, yet none the less is his a crime. It must be expiated, as was John Gabriel Borkman's. Curious it is to note the persistency through a half century of an idea. Like Flaubert, Ibsen did not really add to his early acquired stock of images and ideas.

Tempted almost beyond his powers, Sigurd manages to save his self-respect and remain faithful to his wife. He recognizes his mistake; he has always loved the other woman, though he never knew before that this affection was returned. Hjördis bids him renounce all for her; together they will win the throne of Harfager — the ultimate dream of Sigurd. Sadly he bends his back to her gibes, to her devilish suggestions. One way is open to him. He can fight Gunnar in behalf of Oernulf and thus avenge the death of Thorolf and put an end to an existence become insupportable. Hjördis has other plans.

Act IV is short. We see the unhappy Oernulf lamenting his murdered son before a black grave mound. He sings his Drapa over the

dead body. A storm arises. It is a night of terrors. Kara, the peasant, still unappeased, burns the home of Gunnar. Hjördis meets Sigurd and, after entreating vainly, shoots him with the bow and arrow she has made expressly for the purpose. A strand of her hair is entwisted in the bowstring. Sigurd, dying, tells her to her horror that he is not a pagan, that even in death he will not meet her "over there," for he is a Christian man; the white God is his; King Æthelstan of England taught him to know the new religion. (The epoch of the play is A.D. 933.) Despairingly, the strong-souled woman casts herself into a chasm and is translated into Valhall by her immortal sisters, the Valkyrs. This last scene is hopelessly undramatic and, as given at the Imperial, quite meaningless. After Hjördis commits suicide the curtains shut out the scene.

In the play, however, Oernulf, Dagny, Gunnar, and Egil are discovered watching the storm. Gunnar claims the protection of the man whose son he has slain. The body of Sigurd is found, and the arrow of Hjördis. "So bitterly did she hate him," whispers Dagny to herself with true Ibsenesque irony. Gunnar says aside, "She has slain him — the night before the combat; then she loved me after all." These sly, pitiless strokes would have proved too much to a British audience, sufficiently outraged by several of Hjördis's very plain speeches. The little Egil sees his mother on a black horse "home-faring"

with the Valkyrs. The storm passes; peacefully the moon casts its mild radiance upon this field of strange conflict.

IV

THE THREE EPICS

Brand (1866), Peer Gynt (1867), Emperor and Galilean (1873)

In his three epical works, — for epics they are, — Brand, Peer Gynt, and Emperor and Galilean, Ibsen reached poetic heights that he has never since revisited. The spiritual fermentation attendant upon his first visit to Italy in May, 1864, gave Norway, indeed all Scandinavia, its first modern epic. And it is not strange that this Italian journey should produce such monumental results. Goethe was at heart never so German as in Italy; and Ibsen, one of the few names that will be coupled with the poet of Faust when the intellectual history of the past century is written, was never such a Northman as in Rome, though he had left his native land full of bitterness, a self-imposed exile, doomed to exist on the absurd stipend doled out to him with niggardly hands by the Norwegian government. Yet, instead of turning to antiquity, he penned Brand, one of the few great epics since Milton and Goethe, and then as a satiric pendant let loose the de-

moniac powers of his ironic fantasy in Peer Gynt. In this vast symphony, Brand is the first sombre movement, Peer Gynt a brilliant Mephistophelian scherzo, while Emperor and Galilean is the solemn and mystic last movement.

Brand places Ibsen among the great mystics beginning with Dante and including the names of Da Vinci, Swedenborg, mad naked Blake, and Goethe. Unlike the poet of the Divine Comedy he set his hell on the heights, for the hell of the defeated is the story of that stern Brand who left his church in the valley, summoned his flock to follow him and found an Ice Church on the high hills. Only Hamlet and Faust are recalled to the reader as they see this soul warped by its ideal of "All or Nothing," and in the spiritual throes of doubt, even despair. His God is the merciless Jahveh of the later Hebraic dispensation, not the Eloihim of the earlier. Weakness of will is the one unpardonable sin. Heroic as a Viking, he stands for all the Norwegian race was not when Ibsen wrote his poem. Life broken into tiny fragments, waverers and compromisers, he lashes his countrymen so that across these pages you seem to hear the whistle of the knotted thongs. Conventional religion comes in for its share of abuse from the tongue of this new Elijah. The wife Agnes, one of the poet's most charming creations, is at first attracted by the shallow, artistic Einar. When she meets

Brand her soul goes out to him. "Did you see him tower as he talked?" she asks her companion. But as he sacrificed his mother to his ideal, so he sacrifices his wife. Their child does not thrive in the gloomy valley where this cure of souls abides. No matter. He remains. God's will be done. The child dies. His clothes are sold to a gypsy because Agnes has shed tears over them — a human weakness. She opens her window in the evenings so that the lamplight will fall across the grave of her child. That consolation, too, is denied her. Be hard! might be the Nietzschean motto of her husband. And so she dies. His mother died saying, "God is not so hard as my son," because he refused her the sacraments. She had ill-gotten wealth. To make restitution was his demand — All or Nothing. He would not make bargains, be a paltry go-between for God and man. His nobility of character repels. People feel his power but find him unapproachable. The *laissez-faire* policy, the easy-going philosophy of the official servants of God, raises wrath in his bosom. He would drive these blasphemers from the sacred precincts of the temple. It is his realization of the hopelessness of reforming men by the old means that sends him to the mountains. He has built a church, for the old church is too small. But the new, a symbol of the soaring soul, is misunderstood. It is a gift from Brand to his people, and so horrified is he with his failure to stir these petty

souls that he throws the church key in the river and summons the multitude to follow him upward, up there in the clouds, where the true God abides away from the vileness of mart and palace. Some follow, many mock, and he is finally stoned and deserted. A crazy creature, Gerd, who symbolizes wildness, an egotist who scorns human ties; she it is who is appointed by the poet to open Brand's eyes. His spiritual pride has been his downfall, for while thinking of others he has not "found salvation for his own soul." The avalanche which she starts overwhelms them both, but not before he hears a voice answer his prayer—does mankind's will, then, count for nothing. "He is the God of Love," is the reply.

Havelock Ellis thinks that "we have to look back to the scene in the death of Lear" to attain a like imaginative height in literature. Ibsen has set his character in a most life-like *milieu*. His people are painted with a broad, firm hand. The mayor, the schoolmaster, the doctor, the sexton, are living men, and their worldly natures are clearly indicated. Prophet Brand is, though Ibsen told Georg Brandes that he could have made him sculptor or politician, as well as priest. Sören Kierkegaard and his revolt from orthodoxy may have supplied the poet for his portrait. He, however, more than half hints that it was Gustav Lammers who was the original of Brand, a fiery nonconformist man who built his own

church and seceded from the current evangelicism.

But, after all, Brand is Ibsen's own portrait, is a mask for Ibsen himself. The beauty, grim as it is, and the picturesque variety of this great poem almost match its ethical grandeur.

The Ice Church is too cold for humanity, Brand's ideal too inhuman. Yet he has willed, he has not wholly failed. His error was in its application — in not willing enough for himself. "Be what you are," he exhorts the weak Einar, "whatever it is, but be it out and out." No compromise with the powers of evil — yet Brand's doctrine led to his destruction. Not to will is a crime, to will too much leads to madness. What is the answer to this perplexing problem? Ibsen does not give it. In his phraseology "to be oneself is to lose oneself." And Brand, who was for "All or Nothing," severed his dearest ties and finally was destroyed himself.

The complexity must not repel the student. Mr. C. H. Herford's translation with the illuminating introduction is well worth the reading. He thinks that the "Norwegian priest is tortured . . . as was Hamlet; Hamlet's power of resolve is depleted by the restless discursiveness of his intellect; Brand's failure in sympathetic insight hangs together with his peremptory self-assertion. . . . Unless appearances wholly deceive, Shakespeare drew in Hamlet the triumph of impulses which agitated

without dominating his nature." Ibsen had *lived* Brand, he confesses it.

But as a stage play, and it has been played, it is not a success. It lacks condensation. A battle-field of two tense souls — for Agnes's almost matches Brand's at times — it is too long and too loosely constructed in its joints for effective dramatic representation. Dr. Wicksteed makes an acute point when he shows that Einar's smug conversion — which fills Brand with loathing — is missed by the priest, for "only a man whose heart is dead can live by that destroying phrase, 'All or Nothing.' The principle which slays the saintly Agnes, and drives her heroic husband mad, fits the miserable Einar like a glove; he is happy and at home with it."

Self-realization through self-surrender is the fundamental organ-tone of the masterly, overarching epic. And note the symbolism of the church, the church in the valley, and Gerd's Ice Church! This symbol of architecture reappears in The Master Builder, just as the avalanche motive reappears in When We Dead Awaken. The mountain-tops are the abodes of Ibsen's heroes, — who are his thoughts, — and there he scourges the human soul on this lofty Inferno.

In Brand, Ibsen girded against the weaklings, the men of half-hearted measures, the conventional cowards of civilization. In Peer Gynt he makes a hero of such a one, a lying, boastful fellow. The poem is one of the most

audacious and fantastic ever written. Yet with all its shifting phantasmagoria, it so stands four-square rooted in the old, brown earth. Peer is a rascal, but a lovable one; a liar from the first page to the last. He "is himself" without a deviation from the crooked paths of selfishness. Again Ibsen puzzles, for the very keystone of his ethical arch is individuality. Peer is a compromiser at every station of his variegated career. He, too, treats his mother cruelly, though from different motives from Brand. He runs off with another man's bride, because he has been too lazy to win her lawfully. He does this in the face of a woman, Solveig, for whom he has entertained the first unselfish desire of his shallow existence; he goes to the trolls and lives in the swamps of sensuality — where Solveig follows him, but is left; he goes to America after his mother's death, — a most affecting page, — makes a fortune by selling Bibles, rum, and slaves, buys a yacht, sets up for a cosmopolitan; "has got his luck from America, his books from Germany, his waistcoat and manners from France, his industry and keen eye for the main chance from England, his patience from the Jews, and a touch of the *dolce far niente* from the Italians." He makes friends, for he is successful. They maroon him on a savage shore, but blow up his yacht. He thanks God for the swift retribution — as others have done in similar predicaments — though he thinks the Lord is not very

economical. Many adventures ensue, from the episode with the dancing girl Anitra to the crowning in a madhouse of Peer as Emperor of Himself.

At last, old, ruined, he returns to Norway. In the mountains, in the identical hut, he finds the patient Solveig, who has always loved him. He has met the Button-moulder, Death, who tells him that he is doomed to the melting-pot, there to be re-minted. He has never been himself, he the thrice-selfish Peer Gynt. His old thoughts come back to him materialized as balls of wool. "We are thoughts," they cry, "thou shouldst have thought us; hands and feet thou shouldst have lent us." So this scamp, who "lived his life" seemingly to the utmost, never lived it at all, blenches before the Boyg, the great, amorphous mass that blocks his path, and listened to its whispered "Go round." He always skirted difficulties, never faced them, a moral coward, a time-server. Yet he may escape the Button-moulder, for Solveig has believed in him. "Where have I been with God's stamp on my brow?" he asks her, bewildered before the dawning perception of his worthlessness.

"In my faith, in my hope, in my love," she smilingly answers. The Button-moulder calls without the house; "we meet at the last cross-way, Peer, and then we shall see — I say no more." But Solveig guards him as he sleeps.

The curse of Peer Gynt is his overmastering imagination coupled with a weak will. It proves

his downfall. "To be oneself, is to slay oneself," says the Button-moulder. The lesson is the same as in Brand, — self-realization through self-surrender. This parody of Don Quixote and Faust was never the real Peer Gynt until the end.

The musical setting of Peer Gynt by Eduard Grieg gives no adequate idea of the poem's dazzling humour, versatility, poetic power, malice, swing, speed, and tenderness. Grieg, with the possible exception of the episode of Peer's mother's death, has written in a sheer melodramatic vein. Brand and Peer Gynt brought to Ibsen the fame he deserved, though it was thus far confined to Norway.

The huge double drama, Emperor and Galilean, with the sub-title, a World Historic Drama, is in a theatrical sense one of Ibsen's few failures, though epical literature would sadly miss this vast and hazardous undertaking devoted to Cæsar's apostasy and the Emperor Julian, all in its ten acts. Naturally enough, even Ibsen's admirers admit that the work lacks dramatic unity and that it is without culminating interest. Yet dramatic it is, this narrative of Julian, the so-called Apostate, who conceived the crazy notion of dragging from its grave the forms of a dead and dusty paganism. He hates the Galilean and finally becomes mad enough to crown himself a god. The vivid pictures testify to Ibsen's powers of evocation, for it is said that

he was not deeply read in the classics. Dr. Emil Reich finds in Julian something decadent, a prevision of the familiar Parisian type noted by Huysmans. Rather have Huysmans and Ibsen gone to ancient Rome for their figures — Julian has a touch of the Neronic cruelty and lust, just as he has that monstrous artist's Cæsarian madness of dominion.

It is the scholar Julian listening to the teachings of the seer Maximus who most attracts. Maximus predicts the advent of the Third Kingdom, the kingdom which is neither that of the Galilean nor of the Emperor. It is an empire that will harmonize both the empire of pagan sensuality and the empire of the spirit and bring forth the empire of man. That will be the Third Kingdom; "he is self-begotten the man who wills. . . . Emperor God — God Emperor. Emperor in the kingdom of the spirit, — and God in that of the flesh." This mystic thought recalls that Joachim of Flora, whose prophecies of the approaching Third Kingdom were approved by the Franciscans, by that section which was called the Spirituals.

There are some superb "purple patches" in Emperor and Galilean, particularly in the second drama. Jealous of the Redeemer, for he would be a world builder, he asks Maximus: —

"Where is he now? What if that at Golgotha, near Jerusalem, was but a wayside matter, a thing done, so to speak, in passing, in a leisure hour? What if he goes on and on, and suffers,

and dies, and conquers, again and again, from world to world? O that I could lay waste the world! Maximus — is there no poison in consuming fire, that could lay creation desolate, as it was on that day when the spirit moved alone on the waters?" A second Alexander this, not groaning for more worlds to conquer, but eager to slay the Son of Man.

Maximus has told him that, "You have tried to make the youth a child again. The empire of the flesh is swallowed up in the empire of the spirit. But the empire of the spirit is not final, any more than the youth is.

"You have tried to hinder the growth of the youth — to hinder him from becoming a man. O fool, who have drawn your sword against that which is to be — against the third empire in which the twin-natured shall reign."

After bewailing that the Galilean will live in succeeding centuries to tell the tale of the Emperor's defeat, Julian sees blood-red visions, the hosts of the Galilean, the crimson garments of the martyrs, the singing women, and all the multitudinous sent to overthrow him. In the ensuing battle he dies with the historic exclamation upon his lips, — "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

Wicksteed points out that Julian is a pedant, not a prophet. Again we may see operating in another environment a Peer Gynt on the throne, a Skule of the Pretenders. Julian doubted as did Skule his divine call; he did not really

believe in himself, and under he went on his way to the Button-moulder. Emperor and Galilean has all the largeness of an epic and much of that inner play of spiritual functions which may be seen amplified in its two predecessors.

The double drama was performed for the first time in its original language at the National Theatre, Christiania, March 20, 1903. It was played in German in connection with the celebration of Ibsen's seventieth birthday in Berlin in 1898, and earlier in 1896 at Leipsic.

V

THE YOUNG MEN'S LEAGUE

(1869)

The Young Men's League is actually the first of the prose social dramas, though in Love's Comedy, published seven years earlier, we find the poet preoccupied with love and marriage. Politics and politicians fill the picture, an exceedingly animated one of the new play. Some critics pretend to see in the figure of Steensgaard a burlesque of Björnson, with whom about this time Ibsen had a quarrel. But this has been denied. Steensgaard is the ideal politician, — that is, the politician without ideals. He is carried away by the sound of his own sonorous voice, by the rumbling of his own empty rhetoric. Brought up in low environ-

ment, he snobbishly worships all this as base and vulgar. So we find him capitulating to the enemy at the first attack, a little flattery, a pleasant visit to an aristocratic house, a peep at the daughter, and Steensgaard has changed his political skin. He has so long misled himself that he misleads others. He is a phrase-monger, a *parvenu*, a turn-coat. He is, in a word, a politician all the world over. Thackeray would have delighted in the portrait of this blathering, self-confident, self-deceived — a Peer Gynt in politics, but without Peer's brilliant imagination. The characters grouped about him are very vital, — the pompous aristocrat, Chamberlain Bratsberg; the impressionable Selma; Monsen the swindler, Bastian and Ragna his children; the shrewd Dr. Fjeldbo; Daniel Heire and Madame Rundholmen — the latter one of those incomparably observed women of the lower middle classes so grateful to Ibsen's powers of depiction.

When the comedy was produced, a scandal ensued. The dramatist had spared neither high nor low. The piece was hissed and applauded until the authorities interfered. It is more local than any of the plays, though some of the characters are sufficiently universal to be appreciated on any stage, Steensgaard the lying lawyer-politician in particular.

VI

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

(1877)

Pillars of Society is the fifteenth play of Henrik Ibsen, several of which, among them Norma and The Warriors' Tomb, have not yet been published. Written in Munich, it appeared in the summer of 1877. The ensuing autumn saw the play on the boards of nearly all the Scandinavian theatres; Germany followed suit early the next year, and the success of this satiric social comedy ran like wildfire throughout the continent. It was not until December 15, at the Gaiety Theatre, London, that it had an English hearing.

There is something of Swift in its bitter strokes of sarcasm at the expense of the ruling commercial classes. The Northern Aristophanes, who never smiles as he lays on the lash, exposes in Pillars of Society a varied row of whited sepulchres. His attitude is never that of Thackeray: he never seems to sympathize with his snobs and hypocrites as does the kindly English writer. There is no mercy in Ibsen, and his breast has never harboured the milk of human kindness. This remote, objective art does not throw out tentacles of sympathy. It is too disdainful to make the slightest concession, hence the difficulty in convincing an audience that the poet is genuinely human. We are all of us so accustomed to the

little encouraging pat on our moral hump that in the presence of such a ruthless unmasking of our weaknesses we are apt to cry aloud, — "Ibsen, himself, is an enemy of the people!"

It is an ugly, naked art, an art unadorned by poetic halos, lyric interludes, comic reliefs, or the occasional relaxation by wit of the dramatic tension. Love me, love my truth, the playwright says in effect; and we are forced to make a wry face as we swallow the nauseous and unsugared pill he forces down our sentimental gullets. His sinews still taut from the extraordinary labours of Emperor and Galilean, that colossal epic-drama of Julian the Apostate, the Scandinavian poet felt the need of unbending, so he wrote Pillars of Society. It is the second of that group of three dramas dealing with social and political themes in the large, external style of which he is the unrivalled possessor. Ibsen smelt corruption in all governments of the people by the people and against the people. He foresaw that King Log was more dangerous than King Stork. For him Demos has ever been the most exacting of tyrants, the true foe to individuality.

The student of social pathology will find much that is amusing in a grim sort of a way scattered throughout the scenes of Pillars of Society. There is much action, much swift dialogue, much slashing wit, and the general atmosphere is of a more breezy character than in the plays which follow this one. Cheerful

it is not. Surgery, whether of the body or the soul, is not exactly pleasure-breeding. The story is not an involved one, though Ibsen has woven a sufficiently complex pattern to afford æsthetic interest in its disentanglement. If Consul Bernick had not been in need of money, he would not have married his meek wife, Betty, to whose elder half-sister he had previously pledged his faith. As a pillar of society in a thriving community, as the pillar of its church and commerce, Bernick could never afford to be caught napping. Once it had nearly happened. He had carried on an illicit love affair with a French actress. Her husband surprised the pair. Bernick contrived an escape. So his brother-in-law, who had slipped away to America, was blamed for the scandal, and you may easily imagine the tongue-wagging and head-nodding in this philistine town.

It seems that Ibsen levelled his shafts at a species of social hypocrisy peculiar to his native land. Here in America, where all is fair and naught is foul, his satire falls short of its mark, for our target is clean, and our sepulchres are unwhited! Probably this optimistic sense of being different — and better than our neighbours — fills us with satisfaction in the presence of an Ibsen play. Strangely enough the people in this very drama entertain identical opinions on the subject of their American brethren! Perhaps Pillars of Society is not so provincial in its character-painting as some of

Ibsen's critics have imagined. Perhaps his shoe fits!

The return of the supposed fugitive Johan, Bernick's scapegoat brother-in-law, finds the Consul beloved and respected by his fellow-citizens. He has educated in his own household Dina Dorf, the daughter of that French actress with whom years before he had seen merry days — that is, if there is really any joy of life in those dull, drab Norwegian communities. With Johan returns Lona Hessel, the elderly sister-in-law. The Bernick household is dismayed at this rude invasion of the "Americans," and the tragi-comedy begins in earnest. Bernick has not improved with the years. He has become more grasping for wealth and power. He even conceives the idea of sending to sea an untrustworthy ship. Its rotten hulk almost carries off his young son, while the father imagines that the unwelcome visitors, Johan and Lona, are on board. To complicate matters, Dina, sick of the false odour of sanctity in the home of Bernick, loves Johan, and to the infinite scandal of every one she speaks out her mind. *She* will go to America, where people are not so good — alas! Ibsen didn't know that our national goodness is becoming as a rank, threatening vegetation upon the body politic.

Furthermore Bernick, so as to make himself pose as a self-sacrificing, deeply injured man, has insinuated that Johan was an embezzler as well as an immoral man. About the figure

of the Consul there cluster several admirable hypocrites: Rector Rörlund, who keeps Bernick upon his pinnacle of self-righteousness; Hilmar Tönnessen, who goes about sniffing out other people's soul maladies and carrying with peevish pride the "banner of the ideal"; and several merchants, who are in with the Consul whenever a "deal," public or private, is possible. The minor characters, the women in particular, are individually outlined from the shipbuilder Aune, with his sturdy adherence to the interests of the Bernick house and his weak-kneed code of morals, to the veriest sketch of a clerk — all are human, brimming over with selfish humanity.

The catastrophe is led up to with a masterly gradation of incident. Confronted by Lona when in his darkest hour of despair and need, Bernick has the lying garments in which he invests himself for his family and friends torn away by the fearless words of Lona. She does not accuse him of committing the one unforgivable, biblical sin which Ella Rentheim throws at the desperate head of John Gabriel Borkman. No, Lona does not say, "You slew the love that was in me;" she tears up two incriminating letters, she declares that with Johan and Dina she will return to America; but — but Bernick must escape from the cage of lies in which, like a monstrous master-spider, he has been spinning a network of falsehoods for the world. He groans out that it is too late,

that he must "sink along with the whole of the bungled social system" — he is not the first, nor the last man, who has attempted to shift upon society his individual sins. He calls himself the tool, not the pillar, of society, and you seem to see, as he talks, the plaster flaking off in great patches, and the ugly stains coming into view.

A grand demonstration by the town is made: torchlight, music, speeches, a presentation, and all the rest of the cheap, vain humbug of which we all disapprove so heartily in America — and indulge in it about once every hour. Bernick tells the truth, confesses that he is the real sinner, not Johan, and shocks his world immeasurably, especially the priggish Rörlund. That worthy rector, who would marry Dina in a pitying, pardoning way, is flouted by her. She leaves with Johan. Then, it may be confessed, there is a flat, conventional conclusion, "docked of its natural, tragic ending," as Allan Monkhouse truthfully declares. Bernick is in reality re-whitewashed at the close of this powerful, picturesque play.

One feels instinctively that more could be done with Lona and Bernick, more utilized from the strong scenes between Aune and Bernick. But in John Gabriel Borkman, Ibsen later realized the wicked grandeur inherent in the character of a tremendous financial scoundrel; like Balzac's Mercadet, his Borkman is a figure hewn from the native rock. Bernick is

a man you may meet in Wall Street, and certainly on any Sunday in any given church you enter. He is proud, pious, fat as to paunch, and lean-souled; and he drives a hard bargain with God, man, and devil. In a word, the average pillar of any society, one who believes in making religion and patriotism pay; a good father, a good husband, a good fellow, is the inscription chiselled on his marble mortuary shaft — and then the worms stop to smile archly at their eternal banquet! Truth is always at the bottom of a grave. And Ibsen is a terrible digger of graves when he so wills it.

As a matter of record it would not be amiss to state that Pillars of Society, written in 1877, was produced in America at the Irving Place Theatre, December 26, 1889, with Ernest Possart as Bernick, Frau Christien as Mrs. Bernick, and Frl. Leithner as Lona. In English it was first heard at the Lyceum Theatre, March 6, 1891, with George W. Fawcett as Bernick, Alice Fischer as Lona, and Dina Dorf played by Bessie Tyree. There was a third performance at Hammerstein's Opera House three days later. Wilton Lackaye and his company revived the piece at the Lyric Theatre, New York, April 15, 1904.

VII

A DOLL'S HOUSE

(1879)

Ibsen has been persistently confounded with those mannish women who, averse from marriage, furiously denounce it as a tyrannical institution. Strindberg, who was half mad at the time, accused the Norwegian poet of being a woman's rights advocate. Dr. Brandes has told us the contrary. Ibsen was never a woman's man; he did not like women's society, preferring men's. He did not admire John Stuart Mill's book on the woman question, and entertained an antipathy for those writers who declare, gallantly enough, that they owe much in their books to their wives. A sheer sense of justice impelled him to view the institution of matrimony as not always being made above. A woman is an individual. She has, therefore, her rights, not alone because of her sex, but because she is a human being. So he wrote A Doll's House to show a woman's soul in travail beset by obstacles of her own and others' making.

Thoroughly he accomplished his task. Nora Helmer, a lark-like creature in Act I, grows before our eyes from scene to scene until, at the fall of the curtain, she is another woman. In few dramas has there been such a continuous

growth. The play seems a trifle outmoded today, not because its main problem will ever grow stale, but because of the many and conflicting meanings read into it by apostles of feminine supremacy. Ibsen declared in one of his few public speeches that he had no intention of representing the conventional, emancipated woman.

It is Nora as an individual cheated of her true rights that the dramatist depicts, for her marriage, as she discovers in the crisis, has been merely material and not that spiritual tie Ibsen insists upon as the only happy one in this relation. So she goes away to find herself, and her going was the signal for almost a social war in Europe. His critics forgot that Ibsen was a skilled deviser of theatric effects, and such an unconventional exit was not without its artistic values. This does not mean that he was insincere — Nora's departure is a logical necessity. Without it the play would be sheer sentimental, and therefore banal, nonsense. Nevertheless, that slammed door reverberated across the roof of the world, and not over the knocking at the gate in Macbeth was there such critical controversy.

One finds Nora Helmer a fascinating type of womanhood to study. To be sure, she is not new — neither is Mother Eve, but can we ponder the apple story too often or unprofitably? This Scandinavian Frou-Frou, bursting with joy of life, is confronted with a grave problem, and as

she has been brought up perfectly irresponsible and a doll, she solves the problem in an irresponsible manner. She commits forgery, believing that the end justified the means, and you perforce sympathize with her as her act brought good, not evil — rather would not have brought evil if it had not been for the evil mind of Krogstad.

After the awakening Nora resolves to go away — away from husband, home, and children. That such a revulsion should occur in the nature of a gadabout and featherbrain like this girl, is not unnatural. Now Torvald is not a bad man. On the contrary, he is what the world calls a good man, and he is an insufferably selfish, priggish bore into the bargain. Nora knew that when she left him "the miracle of miracles" would never occur — that the leopard does not change his spots. The end of this human fugue, so full of passion and vitality, contains some of the strongest lines Ibsen penned. Nora is such a volatile, gay, frivolous, restless, perverse, affectionate, womanly, childish, loving, and desperate creature, that we hardly marvel at both her husband and her father petting her like a doll. The awakening was severe, and Torvald suffered, and it served him quite right. Dr. Rank forms "a cloudy background" to the happiness of the Helmer household. He is very interesting, with his cynicism and tragic resolves and passion. But he serves his purpose in indicating certain things to Nora. He

first suggests, unconsciously, to her the thought of suicide, for Krogstad discovers this thought lurking in her mind at his second visit and just after Dr. Rank has made his confession of love to her. As for Krogstad, he is only a man of mixed impulses. He could have been a decent member of society; indeed, he tried hard to be. The unfortunate entrance into the Helmer family life of Mrs. Linden upset all of his calculations, and he became a blackmailer in consequence.

The afternoon of February 15, 1894, Mrs. Fiske played Nora in A Doll's House at the Empire Theatre. It was a benefit performance. Her support was unusually strong; W. H. Thompson, the Krogstad, won critical admiration for the manner in which he suggested the shades of a character whose possibilities for good and evil are perplexingly interwoven. Mrs. Fiske was, however, the surprise of the day. Shedding her Frou-Frou skin, she sounded every note on the keyboard of Nora Helmer's character. She was bird-like, evasive, frankly selfish, boiling with material enthusiasms, a creature of air, fire, caprice, gayety, and bitterness. Excepting Agnes Sorma no one has indicated with such *finesse* of modulation the awakened moral nature of the woman. And it is to be doubted if Mrs. Fiske ever bettered that first rapturous interpretation.

The ending is an unresolved cadence, though to the ear attuned to the finer spiritual harmonies

it is not difficult to discern that the wife will suffer and grow — and be herself. But the children, cries the world! Ibsen, who has proved his love for the little ones, answers the question by another. Read Ghosts, and you will see what might have become of the Helmer children if Nora had stayed at home and continued in her life-lie.

As an acting rôle Nora has won the suffrages of such artists as Betty Hennings, Agnes Sorma, Helene Odilon, Gabrielle Réjane, Friederike Gossmann, Lilly Petri, Modjeska, Mrs. Fiske, Irene Triesch, Hilda Borgström (a great Hilda Wangel), Stella Hohenfels, and Eleonore Duse.

Henrik Ibsen once attended a dinner given in his honour by the Ladies' Club of Christiania, and made a speech about himself in answer to a toast. Miss Osina Krog, in proposing Ibsen's health, spoke of him as a poet who had done much for woman through his works. Dr. Ibsen's reply was this: —

All that I have composed has not proceeded from a conscious tendency. I have been more the poet and less the social philosopher than has been believed. I have never regarded the women's cause as a question in itself, but as a question of mankind, not of women. It is most certainly desirable to solve the woman question among others, but that was not the whole intention. My task was the description of man. Is it to some extent true that the reader weaves his own feelings and sentiments in with what he reads and that they are attributed to the

poet? Not alone those who write, but also those who read, compose, and very often they are more full of poetry than the poet himself. I take the liberty to thank you for the toast, with a modification, for I see that women have a great task before them in the field for which this ladies' association works. I drink the health of the club and wish it happiness and success.

I have always regarded it as my task to raise the country and to give the people a higher position. In this work two factors assert themselves. It is for the mothers to awake, by slow and intense work, a conscious feeling of culture and discipline. This feeling must be awakened in individuals before one can elevate a people. The women will solve the question of mankind, but they must do so as mothers. Herein lies the great task of women.

And this speech quite dissipates the notion that Ibsen had affiliations with the Feminists.

VIII

GHOSTS

(1881)

Following the scandal created by the first performance of A Doll's House, Ghosts seemed like a deliberate affront to his critics, a gauntlet hurled into their faces by the sturdy arm of Dr. Ibsen. Now, he said, in effect, — though he has never condescended to pulpit polemics or café æsthetics, — here is a wife who resolves to endure

who stays at home and bears that burden. Nora Helmer refused! Behold Mrs. Alving, the womanly woman, good housewife — *malgré elle même* — and good mother!

Ghosts, like much that is great in art, is a very painful play. So is Macbeth, so is Lear, so is Œdipus Rex. There are some painful pictures in the small gallery of the world's greatest art, and in music analogous examples are not wanting. Probably the most poignant emotional music thus far written is to be found in the last movement of Tschaikowsky's Pathetic Symphony. It is cosmic in its hopeless woe. Yet Ibsen gives the screw a tighter wrench, for he conceived the idea of transposing all the horror of the antique drama to the canvas of contemporary middle-class life.

He gives us an Orestes in a smoking jacket, the Furies within the walls of his crumbling brain. Naturally the academic critics cry aloud at the blasphemy. The ancients, Racine, Shakespeare, and the rest, softened their tragic situations by great art. As in a vast mirror the souls of the obsessed pass in solemn, processional attitudes; the contours are blurred; the legend goes up to the heavens in exquisite empurpled haze.

"Very well," grumbles in answer the terrible old man from Norway, "I'll give you a new *æsthetik*. Art in old times is at two removes from life. I'll place it at one. I'll banish its opiates, its comic reliefs, all its conventions that mellow and anæstheticize."

Then he wrote Ghosts. It is terrible. The Orestean Furies are localized. They are no longer poetic and pictorial abstractions, but a disease. So you can accept the thesis or leave it. One thing you cannot do: you cannot be indifferent; and therein lies one secret of Ibsen's power. It is his aloofness that his audiences resent the most of all. If, like another master showman, Thackeray, Ibsen would occasionally put his tongue in his cheek, or wink his eye in an aside, or whisper that the story was only make-believe — there, dear ones, don't run away — why, the Ibsen play might not be avoided as if it were the pest. But there are no concessions made, and the sense of reality is tremendous and often nerve-shocking.

The blemishes in Ghosts are few, yet they are in full view. That fire is our old friend, "the long arm of coincidence." And what pastor of any congregation, anywhere, could have been such a doddering old imbecile as Manders with his hatred of insurance? Possibly he represents a type of evangelical and very parochial clergyman, but a type, we hope, long since obsolete. It is not well, either, to pry deeply into the sources of Oswald's insanity. Thus far it has not been accurately diagnosed. Let us accept it with other unavoidable conventions. The pity about Ghosts, which is in the repertory of every continental theatre, is that the Ibsenites made of it a stalking horse for all kinds of vagaries, from free love to eating turnips raw.

Ibsen holds no brief for free love, or for diseased mental states. You may applaud Mrs. Alving, you may loathe her; either way it is a matter of no import to this writer. To call Ghosts immoral is a silly and an illogical proceeding, for it is, if it is anything at all within the domain of morals, a dramatic setting of the biblical wisdom that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. This may be pure pathology; in Ibsen's hands it is a drama of terrible intensity.

Ghosts is a very simple but painful story. The dissolute Captain Alving, the father of Oswald, dies of his debaucheries before the play begins. His wife, the mother of Oswald, has believed it her bounden duty to hide from the world the cancer which is eating up her family life. She partially succeeds, and only when he brings shame to her very door does she weaken and fly to Pastor Manders, whom she once loved, and who presumably loves her. This worthy clergyman does only what his ideals have taught him. He refuses her refuge and sends her back to her husband, admonishing her that her duty is to accept the cross which God has imposed upon her and to reclaim her husband. Frozen up in heart and soul, Mrs. Alving begins a long fight with the beasts of appetite which rule her husband's nature. She sends away her son Oswald, she even adopts a bastard daughter of her husband's, and marries off the mother — a servant in her employ — to a car-

penter, Jacob Engstrand by name. The girl grows up to womanhood; Oswald, her son, becomes a painter and lives in Paris. Captain Alving dies a miserable death, his vices a secret to all but a few, while his widow seeks a salve for her conscience by erecting with his money an orphanage. Naturally Pastor Manders takes much interest in this scheme, and when he meets Oswald fresh from Paris, he is struck by the resemblance the morbid, sickly-looking youth bears to his dead father.

But all has not been well with the young man. He has been told by a famous alienist in Paris that his days of sanity are numbered, and he is at a loss to conjecture why such a curse should be visited upon him. He always heard of his father's greatness and goodness. I know of few more touching scenes than the conversation between mother and son, and the horrible confession which follows. It is like a blast from a charnel house; but then, what power, what lucidity! The poor, tortured mother unburthens her heart to her pastor, and of course receives scant consolation. How could he, according to his lights, treat her otherwise than he did? Manders is a type, and he always faces the past; Mrs. Alving looks toward the west for the glimmer of the new light. Alas, it comes not! She only hears her son crying aloud, "Give me wine, mother!" It is the spiritual battle of the old and new. And the old order is changing.

Worse follows. The boy falls in love with

Regina, his half-sister, as to whose identity he is in absolute darkness, for she has been brought up as a maid in his mother's house. But with his mind weakening he clutches at this straw to help him. "Isn't she splendid, mother?" he says, admiring the girl's superb animal development, and we can easily conjecture the agony of his mother. Weak she must appear in the pastor's eyes, for she almost hesitates about revealing the birth of Regina, and wavers on the question of Oswald marrying her. She has been too indulgent to the boy, and Manders does not scruple to tell her so. He is one of your iron-minded men who have a rigid sense of what is right and wrong, and one who would have no sympathy with fluttering souls like Amiel, Lamenais, Clough, or any of the spiritual band to whom dogmas are as steel clamps. Mr. Manders is outraged at Mrs. Alving, and proposes sending Regina away, but where? To her father, Jacob Engstrand, a cunning, low, hypocritical rascal? No, he is not her real father. At the end of the first act both overhear Oswald trying to kiss Regina in the dining room, and another such scene, in which Captain Alving and Regina's mother were the actors, flashes before her, and she cries "Ghosts!" as the curtain falls.

Everything then goes wrong. The Alving orphanage burns down, and there is no insurance because Pastor Mander believes that insuring a consecrated building against fire

would be questioning Providence. But his human respect plays him into the hands of Jacob Engstrand, whose cunning is more than a match for the worthy priest. The dialogue between these two widely varying types is a masterpiece.

Mrs. Alving is at last goaded into telling Oswald and Regina of their blood relationship, and the girl, who is a bad, selfish lot, goes away — deserts the family at the most critical period. She upbraids Mrs. Alving for not having told her of her true station in life, and turns her back on the poor mumbling wretch Oswald. She then walks off defiantly and to her putative father's home, a sailors' dance house. Oswald's mind is completely unhinged by this dénouement, and he confides to his mother in stuttering, stammering accents — the sure forerunner of the crumbling brain within — that he has some poison to kill himself with; that he had relied on Regina to do it when he would be an absolute idiot; but, as Regina was at hand no longer, his mother must play the executioner.

The end is as relentless as a Greek tragedy. The boy chases his mother from room to room imploring and screaming at her to rid him of his pain; as she brought him into life without his consent, so should she send him forth from it when he bade her. It is all frightful, but enthralling. When Oswald cries aloud for the sun, the end has been reached. He is a hap-

less lunatic, and his wretched, half-crazed mother, remembering her promise to him, searches frantically in his pocket for the morphine, and then a merciful curtain bars out from further view the finale. If Ibsen's scalpel digs down too deep and jars some hidden and diseased nerves, what shall we say? Rather can he not turn upon us and cry, "I but hold the mirror up to nature; behold yourselves in all your nakedness, in all your corruption!" Anatole France once wrote, "If the will of those who are no more is to be imposed on those who still are, it is the dead who live, and the live men who become the dead ones." And this idea is the motive of Ghosts.

IX

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

(1882)

Ibsen was called such hard names when Ghosts was produced that William Archer made a collection of all the epithets hurled at the dramatist's head and published them in the *Pall Mall Gazette* with the title Ghosts and Gibberings. Of course the Norwegian was indignant that his play should have been so grossly misunderstood, and in An Enemy of the People he undertook to show that the reformer — the true pioneer — is always abused and pilloried as a dangerous foe to society, and that the

majority is always in the wrong. It is merely a case of Horace's *odi profanum vulgus* over again. But how did the playwright go about his task? Did he paint for us another Ajax defying the social lightning? Did he give us a modern Coriolanus? With his usual ideal-demolishing propensities this terrible old man makes his hero a fussy doctor — a man of the middle classes; a man who forgets the names of the servant girls; a man who loves to see his children feed on roast beef; a man who is economical in little things; a thorough professional gentleman, who explodes, fusses, fumes, fidgets, goes off continually at half cock; a crack-brained enthusiast, a fanatic, and a teller of disagreeable truths. But this doctrinaire with torn trousers is a mighty fellow after all, and by the supreme genius of his creator has quite as much right to live as any Homeric hero. Vitality is the most masterful test of a dramatist's characters; their vitality is their excuse for being. Every figure in An Enemy of the People is brimming with vitality, from the drunken man to Dr. Stockmann. Of course you can hardly be expected to take an overweening interest in the condition of the water pipes in that little town on the south coast of Norway. What are water pipes to Hecuba? Yet a world of principle is involved in these same germ-breeding conduits, and the crafty dramatist has, while apparently depicting local types, contrived to paint a large canvas. Have

we not our Burgomaster Stockmanns, our Editor Hovstads, our timid meliorists like Aslaken, and our fire-eating Billings? Men, men all of them.

What a daring thing it was to write a play without a love scene, a play which is more like life than all the sensualistic caterwaulings, philanderings, and bosh and glitter of the conventional stage, which we fondly fancy holds the mirror up to nature! I have before dwelt on the frugality of his phrases, of the delicacy and concise cleaving power of his dialogues. He has broken with the convention of monologues, of mechanical exits — indeed, of everything which savours of old-time stage artifice. His acts terminate naturally, yet are pregnant with possibilities. You impatiently wait for the next scene, and all because a lot of nobodies in an out-of-the-way Norwegian health resort fight a man who is crazy to tell the truth — and ruin the place. But they are human beings even if they strut not in doublets and hose, and pour not out perfumed passion to the damosel on the balcony.

One cannot sympathize much with Dr. Stockmann. He, while being "the strongest man on earth," brought a calamity on his native place by his awful propensity for blabbing out the truth. Besides, Ibsen leaves us just a margin of doubt in the matter. Perhaps the worthy medical man was not correct in his diagnosis of the waters, and if this were so his conduct was inex-

cusable. But he fought for that most dangerous of ideals, — the truth, even though he flaunts in the face of the mob the fact that "a normally constituted truth lives, let me say as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years: at the outside twenty; seldom longer."

One recalls Matthew Arnold's lecture on Numbers, in which that essayist preached the evils of majority. Ibsen hits at democracy when he can — for him the mass of the people is led by the few. An Enemy of the People is an excellent repertory piece, though one feels the moral stress too strongly in it.

X

THE WILD DUCK

(1884)

The Wild Duck followed An Enemy of the People and preceded Rosmersholm, and is linked by similar inner motives, so these plays really can be grouped as a trilogy. Stockmann, the energetic denouncer of public dishonesty, is now Gregers Werle, just as earnest and sincere in his claims for the ideal and in his strictures upon the erring. But from what a different point of view, with what different results! If Stockmann is a public-spirited reformer, Werle is a sneak and a nuisance. Yet the two men's ideals coincide. Why this shifting of position on the part of Ibsen?

A period of depression, consequent upon his uninterrupted labours and their seeming futility, may have been one reason; the other is probably because Ibsen, charged with the spirit of bitter mockery and in a pessimistic humour, wished to show the obverse of his medal. From Brand to Stockmann his idealists had been heaven-stormers. Well, here is a heaven-stormer, an idealist, who is a dangerous man *because* he tells the truth. Is it well to blurt out the truth on all occasions? The result of this thesis is one of the most entertaining, one of the most tragic, plays of the series.

The Wild Duck has several drawbacks, the chief being the confusing mixture of satire and tragedy; the satire almost oversteps the limitations of satire, the tragic emphasis seems to be placed at the wrong spot. The two qualities mingle indifferently. And the act ends are not satisfying; they lack climax, especially after the catastrophe. But the dialogue as in The League of Youth is an admirable transcript from life. Each character speaks; nothing sounds as if written. The glory of The Wild Duck is its characterization. Even the implacable Dr. Nordau praises Gina Ekdal, calling her a female Sancho Panza. The comparison is a happy one, for her husband, Hjalmar Ekdal, is a Don Quixote of shreds and patches, a weak, vain, boastful, gluttonous, shiftless fellow, and, of course, an idealist. He raves of the ideal, and he is kept to an insane pitch of cloudy self-

exaltation by Gregers Werle, who, discovering that Gina was a former mistress of his father, tells Ekdal with dire results. The little Hedwig, the most touching in Ibsen's gallery of children, is also worked upon by the mischief maker, so that she kills herself from a spirit of sacrifice — more of Werle's idealism.

Ekdal talks grandiloquently about shattered honour to Gina, who bids him eat bread, drink coffee — he has been out all night airing his woes to the storm. The woman's homely wit, solid common sense, and big heart are given with satisfying verisimilitude. Gregers' father, and his housekeeper, Mrs. Sörby; the garret of the photographer Ekdal, where his disgraced, old drunken father has rigged up a mock forest in which he hunts the "wild duck" and other tame fowl; the character of Relling, Ibsen again masked, whose sardonic humour, cruel on the surface, is in reality prompted by a kind heart — he makes people believe they are grander than they are and therefore makes them happier; all these figures in this amazing Vanity Fair are handled masterfully. The World-Lie is here in microcosmic proportions. Every one, except the stolid, unimaginative Gina, swaggers about in the sordid atmosphere of deception. Werle always makes matters worse, and on a painful note of tragedy the curtain falls. The tyranny of the ideal is clearly set forth.

XI

ROSMERSHOLM

(1886)

Rosmersholm was finished in 1886. It followed The Wild Duck, that ghastly mockery of Ibsen's own ideals, and in its turn it was followed by The Lady from the Sea. The astonishingly fecund imagination that drew Gina Ekdal in The Wild Duck did not show symptoms of fatigue in the characterization of Rosmersholm. Its first representation occurred on January 17, 1887. Bergen, Norway, and later Berlin, heard it twenty-five times in one season. London had its taste of the strange combination of evil and good on February 23, 1891; Paris, October 4, 1893, with Lugné-Poë's company. All Europe witnessed with astonishment Rosmersholm, and New York had its first English performance March 28, 1904, at the Princess Theatre by the Century players.

Rosmersholm is not an agreeable drama. Why any one who prefers amusement should sit it out is strange: stranger still the impulse to abuse it because it does not give the same pleasure as the circus. Like Hamlet Rosmersholm has a long foreground — Emerson said the same of Walt Whitman. Hamlet comes before us after the mischief of his life has been worked, his father has been slain, his mother

has married the slayer of her son's father, of her son's happiness. The first scene in Hamlet is illuminating; the first two acts of Rosmersholm are most perplexing to an audience unprepared for them by study. The technical error of the modern play lies here: until Act III we are left in darkness as to Rebekka's character and her ruling motives. Dr. Emil Reich proposed, merely as a matter of experiment, a *schemata* or a new *scenario*, in which the first two acts would show Rebekka West freshly arrived at Rosmersholm, her conduct with Beata Rosmer, the slow persecution of that unfortunate lady, and her death by suicide at the mill-dam. This idea has only one drawback — Ibsen did not follow it when he planned his work.

The truth is that, notwithstanding its mastery of character, Rosmersholm must not be viewed as a drama following any previous model. Emile Faguet declines to consider any longer the northern dramatist as a realist. In his early prose dramas, when he filled in his canvas with jostling throngs, Ibsen was a painter of manners; but as he grew, as his method became less that of his predecessors and more of his own, the action became more intense. The modern psychologic drama was born, the drama in which wills collide, but not the will for trivial things. It is the eternal duel of the sexes, the duel of the old and the new. In this sombre atmosphere, subjected to many pressures by the black and alembicated art of the dramatic wizard,

the circumstances that occur externally are of little significance, the dialogue spoken not to be accepted unless for its "secondary intention." Bald on its surface, its cumulative effect discloses the souls of his people. Commonplace, even provincial as are their gestures, their surroundings, we presently see the envelope of humanity melt away, and soon exposed are the real creatures, the real men and women, exposed as in a dream. It is a cruel art this that unwraps leaf by leaf the coverings of the human soul. With the average dramatist, clever though he may be, his inspiration compared to Ibsen's is like fire in a sheaf of straw — the spark glows for an instant and then there is a vivid crackling of shallow flame. We witness the illuminated edge of an idea, and then it fades into the blackness. Ibsen's flame is more murky than brilliant; but it makes light the swamps he traverses on his irresistible progress to the mountains beyond.

Isolated then as is the *milieu* of Rosmersholm, its real territory is spiritual and not Rosmer's gloomy manor-house. The real and the ideal are indescribably blended. Only after much study does the character of Rebekka Gamvik, called West, yield its secrets. She was born in Finmark. Her mother, possibly of Lapp origin, had carried on an intrigue with Dr. West. Rebekka was its fruit. This she did not know until too late to avert a hideous catastrophe; it was not alone her illegitimacy that so horrified

her when Rector Kroll informed her of it — there were depths which she did not care to explore farther, though she made the offer to Rosmer. Dr. West at his death bequeathed a small library to his adopted daughter, and this proved a Pandora box both to her and to Rosmersholm. Books of a "liberal" character filled the mind of the young woman with dangerous ideas; for like the disciple in Paul Bourget's novel, she speedily translated these ideas into action. As cunning as Becky Sharp, as amorous as Emma Bovary, as ambitious as Lady Macbeth, Rebekka West is the most complete portrait of a designing woman that we know of; she is more trouble-breeding than Hedda Gabler.

Vernon Lee speaks of "the certainty that something is going on, that certain people are contriving to live, struggle, and suffer, such as I am haunted with after reading Thackeray, Stendhal, or Tolstoy." She quotes William James's phrase, "the warm, familiar acquiescence which belongs to the sense of reality." All greatly imagined characters in fiction and drama have this "organic, inevitable existence," which persists in the memory after the book is closed, after the curtain has fallen. Rebekka West is among these characters. She is more terrible than one of Felicien Rop's etched "Cold Devils." She grows in the mind like a poisonous vegetation in the tropics. More magnificent in her power to will and execute evil than Hedda

Gabler, she weakens at the crucial hour; this same will is paralyzed by the old faiths she had sneered away. Edmund Gosse considers the failure of Rosmer as an instance of new wine fermenting in old bottles. Equally, in Rebekka's case, the old wine spoils in the new bottles.

Taking her courage in both hands the comely young woman contrives to enter the household of Rector Kroll, whose sister Beata is married to Rosmer. Kroll is a sturdy schoolmaster, an orthodox Conservative, settled in his conviction that the world was made for good churchmen with fat purses — by no means a ludicrous or a despicable character. As drawn by Ibsen, his is a massive personality, — sane, worldly-wise, a man who hates the things of the spirit just as he hates radicalism. But he doesn't know this. And it is the irony of his fate that he utters those smug phrases dedicated by usage to matters spiritual, while he walks in the way of the flesh. A tower of strength, Kroll is more than the match for such a dreamer as Johannes Rosmer. Brendel, besides being a fantastic adumbration of Ibsen, has propulsive power. He changes, at each of his two appearances, the current of Rosmer's destiny.

Rebekka intuitively discerns this little rift in the armour of Kroll, and flatters the worthy teacher, flatters his wife until she smuggles herself beneath the Kroll roof-tree. There she encounters Rosmer and his wife Beata. The latter is attracted by the fresh, vivacious stranger with

the free manners. Life at Rosmersholm is dull; Johannes is a student of heraldry and a poor companion. Again Rebekka moves. She is soon mistress of Rosmersholm. Her quick brain makes her a delight to the master, her hypocritical sympathy an actual necessity to his wife. Then begins the systematic undermining of both. She lends Dr. West's books to the clergyman, and she insinuates into the feeble brain of Beata the deadly idea that because of her childlessness she is no longer worthy to remain Madame Rosmer. Slowly this idea expands, and its growth is accelerated when Beata sees Johannes falling away from the faith of his fathers. Sick in body, sick in brain, the deluded woman is led step by step to the fatal mill stream. Before the confession that Rebekka is disgraced and must leave Rosmersholm at once, Beata recoils, and quickly commits suicide. And now the curtain rises on Act I.

While these facts are revealed by subtle indications in the dialogue, a feeling of dissatisfaction is also aroused. Not until Act III do we learn of them completely, then through Rebekka's defiant confession. This confession is brought about by a simple result, the failure of Rosmer to reach her ambitious expectations. He is an idealist, a hero of dreams, one who longs to step into the noisy arena of life and "ennoble" men. Little wonder his brother-in-law Kroll mocks him. A Don Quixote without the Don's courage. Surely Ibsen was smiling in his sleeve at

this milk-and-water Superman, this would-be meddling reformer to whom he adds as pendant the pure caricature of Ulric Brendel. Full of the new and heady wisdom garnered from Dr. West's library, Rosmer resolves to break away from his political party, his early beliefs, his very social order. The insidious teachings of Rebekka flush his feeble arteries. He defies Kroll, and the war begins. It is not very heroic, principally consisting in mud-throwing by rival newspapers. Ibsen's vindictive irony — for the episode was suggested by the disordered politics of Norway in 1885 — has ample opportunities for expression in the character of Mortensgaard, the editor of the opposition journal, a man who has succeeded in life because, as Brendel truthfully says, he has managed to live without ideals. Mortensgaard is very vital. He is a scoundrel, but an engaging one in his outspoken cynicism. It is only in print that he hedges. As much as he desires the support of Rosmer, easily the most prominent man on the country-side, it is as Rosmer the priest and conservative and not Rosmer the radical. There are too many of the latter tribe!

This shifting of standards puzzles the clergyman; but when he learns that the editor has a letter written by Beata which might incriminate both Rebekka and himself, then he begins to see his false position, and also the peril of playing with such fire. Slowly he is undeceived as to Rebekka's character. He catches her

eavesdropping, and is stunned by her confession of treachery and murder. In the last act the bewildered man hears another upsetting disclosure. On the eve of her departure for the north, and after Rosmer has made his peace with Kroll and his party, she blurts forth the fatal truth. She has long loved Rosmer, and that love, at first passionate, selfish, impelled her to crime; with the months came a great peace, and then, like a palimpsest showing through the corrupt training of her girlhood, her conscience asserted itself. Rosmersholm and the Rosmer ideals had begun their work of denudation and disintegration. If the Rosmer ideal ennobled, it also killed happiness, which really means that, the sting of her wickedness being extracted, the woman was powerless for good or for evil; she no longer had the inclination to descend into the infernal gulf of crime, nor had she the will power to live the higher life. The common notion is that Rebekka is converted by pure love. It is a suspiciously sudden conversion. Rather let us incline to the belief that the mainspring of her will was broken, even before Rosmer offered her marriage. Of a cerebral type, like the majority of Ibsen's heroines, the violence of her passion once cooled, she had nothing to make her life worth while. Her confession calmed her nerves; after it, like many notorious criminals, she was indifferent to the outcome.

In Rosmer the old churchly leaven began to work. Horrified by Rebekka's revelation, as

disappointed in her as she was in him, he demanded why she had confessed her love. To give you back your innocence, she replied. Does he wish for another test? — then make one, she will not fear it. Straightway the stern priest awakens in him; he has never cast off, despite his blasphemies, the yoke of the Lord. This woman that he loves was the murderess of his wife Beata. An eye for an eye! Expiation must be by blood sacrifice! Does she dare go out on the bridge across the stream and — ? Rebekka, worn out, sick of the vileness of her soul, weary of this life which can now promise nothing, eagerly assents. She will go, and go alone. Soon the last tremor of manhood is felt in the superstitious brain of Rosmer. No, she shall not go alone. Together as man and wife, sealed by a kiss, they will go to eternity. And then the male moral coward and the female companion of his destiny walk calmly to their fate. The housekeeper watches them fall in the raging pool, and she is not as much surprised as one would imagine.

"The dead wife has taken them," she exclaims, for, like every one at Rosmersholm, she believes in the triumph of the dead.

Rebekka West recalls to Georg Brandes the traits of a Russian woman, rather than a Scandinavian. This is true. She might have stepped out of a Dostoïevsky novel. She is far more interesting because far more complex than Hedda Gabler, while not so modish or so fascinating.

She is less of a moral monster than Hedda, and far braver. She, at least, has tested life and found its taste bitter in the mouth. Her eroticism we must take for granted; in the play she displays nothing of it; all is retrospective and introspective. The woman never contemplated suicide; but that way out of the muddle is as good as a wretched existence in some Finnish village. Rosmer proposes the suicide, he dares not face his own wrecked ideals; it takes a man who is master of himself to master his fellows. Life is like running water in his hands; the woman he loved is a failure; all things come too late to those who wait. Of Rebekka's repentance Ibsen leaves us in no doubt; but that she would have elected self-slaughter for her end one strongly discredits. It is despair, not heroism, that exalts her. She committed crime for love, and now that crime she will expiate by self-surrender to her lover's wish.

Browning would have delighted in such a theme as this, and might have developed it into a second Ring and the Book. But dramatically the English poet could never have beaten and bruised the idea into shape. Ibsen has surmounted perilous obstacles in his dramatic treatment of a purely psychologic subject. We wish to witness a conflict of wills, and not the hearsay of such a conflict. Thus nearly two acts seem wasted before the real situation occurs at the close of Act II, when Rosmer proposes marriage. But so little does the poet care for

incident, for detail, that Rosmersholm might be played in one scene; the main action takes place before the curtain goes up. The drama is a curious blending of several styles — there are two motives and two manners. Both Free Will and Determinism — not such Hegelian opposites as we imagine — have each a share; while a mingling of romance and realism is shown in the narration and in the background. The White Horse of Rosmersholm is a colourful bit of symbolism, recalling Walter Scott; the accessory characters are the homeliest and most natural imaginable. Auguste Ehrhard, Ibsen's French admirer, has pointed out that in his subsidiary figures the dramatist is very lifelike and his chief characters are usually the mouthpieces of his theories.

The protagonist of Rosmersholm is Beata. She is seldom long absent from each of the four acts. She peers over the edges of the dialogue, and in every pause one feels her unseen presence. An appalling figure this drowned wife, with her staring, fish-like eyes! She revenges herself on the living in the haunted brain of her wretched husband, and she exasperates Rebekka, slowly wearing away her opposition until the doleful catastrophe. There is something both Greek and Gothic in this spectral fury, this disquieting Ligeia of the milldam.

We find the old hero and heroine obsessed by fate, replaced by this neurasthenic pair.

The antique convention is altered, ancient values depreciated. A hero is no longer interesting or heroic; the heroine, a criminal, is no longer sympathetic. Yet we are enthralled by this spectacle; for if cultivated man disdains the crude dramatic pictures of lust and cruelty admired of his ancestors, he, nevertheless, hankers after tragedy. And it is for the modern that Ibsen has devised a tragic, ironic drama of the soul. In doing this the dramatist is the slave of his own epoch, for, to quote Goethe again, a genius is in touch with his century only by virtue of his defects; he, too, must be an accomplice of his times.

Brandes has quoted Kierkegaard in relation to Ibsen's position: "Let others complain of this age as being wicked. I complain of it as being contemptible, for it is devoid of passion. Men's thoughts are thin and frail as lace, they themselves are the weakling lace-makers. The thoughts of their hearts are too paltry to be sinful." Browning has expressed the same sentiment in his poem, The Statue and the Bust; Ibsen transformed it into drama. His men are dreamers, his women devils; both stop short of the great renunciation or the great revolt. It is the realization of his failure that drives Rosmer and Rebekka with him to death. As her strength of will once dominated him, so his weakness ultimately overmasters her. She is a woman after all, a woman in whom instinct has cried so imperiously that it wrecks her soul.

A fiddle may be mended, says Peer Gynt, but a bell, never! A cracked bell might be the symbol of this extraordinary drama.

Rosmersholm has a planetary moral, and not a theologic one. And the moral law cannot be transcended, he teaches in his elliptical style. He is in the uttermost analysis an optimist.

Those self-indulgent weaklings who seek in Ibsen's dramas for confirmation of their mediocre ideals will be sadly mistaken. Ibsen, if he teaches anything, teaches that the ego is a source of danger. It is in the delicate relations of the sexes that he reveals himself the sympathetic poet and healer. And what greater tragedy on earth is there than an unhappy marriage? Ever the moral idea is the motive of his plays, the one overarching idea of our universe: man's duty to himself, man's duty to his neighbour! That has been the chief concern of all the great dramatists, and to its problems this poet-psychologist has added his burden of the discussion.

In Rosmersholm we see how the self-deceptions of the man and woman who disregarded the natural law and worldly wisdom ruined their lives.

Dr. Wicksteed concludes that "the strength and weakness of Ibsen's much-discussed treatment of marriage lie in the fact that he does not deal with it as marriage at all, but as the most striking instance of the ever recurrent problem of social life, the problem that we may

hide in other cases, but must face here, the problem of combining freedom with permanence and loyalty, of combining self-surrender with self-realization."

Faguet scores Brandes for denying that Ibsen alone among dramatists has used the symbol in a peculiarly poetic manner, proving that if Ibsen is a realist he is also a psychologist, who with his lantern illuminates the recesses of the soul. "For example," writes M. Faguet, "in Rosmersholm, northern nature in its entirety, with its savageness, its immense expanse of space, its broad horizons, its lofty heavens, is the symbol, to my mind, of the moral liberty to which aspire several characters of the play, as, indeed, do half of Ibsen's characters." Finally, the symbol is above all a means for the dramatic poet to give full expression to the poetry in his soul . . . in Ibsen it is essentially a direct product of the author's poetic faculty. . . . Up to the present time Ibsen is the only dramatic poet to write symbolical dramas, that is to say, dramas into which a symbol is introduced occasionally by way of explanation or commentary, or as an element of beauty." The symbol, then, is not a sign of a weakened imagination, as some bigoted "psychiatrists" would have us believe.

And the interpretation of Rosmersholm! Not a half-dozen actresses on the globe have grasped the complex skeins of Rebekka West's character, and grasping them have been able

to send across the footlights the shivering music of her soul. Thus far Scandinavian women have best interpreted her to the satisfaction of the poet. The Italians are too tragic, the French too histrionically brilliant; it is a new virtuosity, a new fingering of the dramatic keyboard, that is demanded.

XII

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

(1888)

Told with infinite technical skill, displayed on a canvas, the tints of which modulate from dull copper to the vague mistiness of a summer sea, this mermaid allegory of Ibsen had a charm that has almost vanished in the translation and vanishes still more at a performance. Ellida Wangel, The Lady from the Sea, is the second wife of Dr. Wangel, a sensible, healthy bourgeois. She is jealous of his dead wife, she is a neurotic creature given to reverie and easily impressed by the strange, the far-away, the poetry of distance. In a mood of fantastic excitement she once betrothed herself to a stranger, a sailor on an American ship. He comes back to claim her, and so perfectly adjusted are the atmospheric conditions of the drama, that we believe she should leave her home and go away with this slightly supernatural and old-time romantic figure.

In a stirring interview Ellida lets out the truths about her married life to the perplexed Wangel — who is a sort of elder brother to Helmer, though kinder of heart. "You bought me," she cries, her bosom overcharged with the truth. It is the truth, but then, who cares to face domestic truth? The worthy doctor is sadly taken aback. He had married Ellida because his children needed a mother; he had — and "you bought me all the same," is the cutting response. It is so. The man sees the case from a different angle, and listens to her story of the stranger. She will go when he returns, she says. He does return. He does claim her; and in the garden scene at the end we see a situation not unlike that last act of Candida. The stranger bids Ellida prepare for departure. Wangel, who knows women better than it would appear, tells her to go. "Now you can choose in freedom and your own responsibility." The woman wavers and finally sends the sailor about his business. The problem has been solved. Ellida can go to her husband of her own free will.

Wicksteed's comment is refreshing. "The mere freedom of choice in which Ellida Wangel and Nora Helmer lay such stress is but a condition, not a principle of healthy life. . . . Without the spirit of self-surrender free choice will never secure self-realization." This lady of the lighthouse — Ellida was brought up in one — has two stepdaughters, the eldest of whom con-

tracts a loveless marriage, as does Svanhild in The Comedy of Love, for the sake of a comfortable home. This parallelism in the sub-plot is a favourite device of Ibsen — as though the children mimicked the parents. The younger daughter later becomes the celebrated Hilda Wangel who charms Master Builder Solness to his glory and ruin. There is little in her here that gives evidence of such potentialities. She is rather pert, wild, and self-conscious. The men of the play are all excellently sketched. The Lady of the Sea, too, presents, in a hazy symbol, the old lesson of individuality and free choice. But the parable has never been so poetically uttered except in Brand.

It is pleasant to record the impressions of a performance of this play at the Lessing Theatre, Berlin, September 30, 1904. Director Otto Brahm has long been a noted Ibsenite, his brochure familiar to all students of the Scandinavian master. Ibsen, in German, plays decidedly smoother, with more sonority and an abundance of the much-decried "atmosphere." The stage settings, as is usual at this artistic playhouse, were beautiful. Yet one felt the danger of transferring to the boards such an imaginative idea. In the hands of Agnes Sorma the difficult rôle of Ellida would not have suffered. Irene Triesch, despite her unequivocal sincerity, is not temperamentally suited to the part. A mermaid who is given to morbid reveries and a fierce buccaneer-like

stranger hardly convince us in this miracle-hating age. Each time the sailor appeared with his big cloak and melodramatic hat I expected to hear the theme of the Flying Dutchman intoned by an invisible orchestra. The human half of the story is more credible. Boletta and Hilda are real flesh and blood, while the tutor Arnholm, impersonated by that excellent character-actor, Emmanuel Reicher, was as big a bore as Ibsen probably intended him to be. The Lady from the Sea is an attempt to capture a mood in which Maeterlinck might have been more successful.

XIII

HEDDA GABLER

(1890)

Hedda Gabler is a great play, great despite its unpleasant theme, and also remarkable, inasmuch as its subject-matter is essentially undramatic — "the picture not of an action but of a condition," as Henry James puts it. The Norwegian poet usually begins to develop his drama where other writers end theirs. Yet so wonderful is his art that we are treated to no long explanations, no retrospective speeches; indeed, the text of an Ibsen play is little more than a series of memoranda for the players. Cuvier-like, the actor must reconstruct a living human from a mere bone of a word. These words

seem detached, seem meaningless, yet in action their cohesiveness is unique; dialogue melts into dialogue, action is dovetailed to action, and fleeting gestures reveal a state of soul. Ibsen does not read as well as he acts. He is extremely difficult to interpret for the reason that the old technic of the actor is inadequate, as Bernard Shaw long ago declared.

One merit of the piece is its absence of literary flavour. It is a slice of life. In his prose dramas, Ibsen throws overboard the entire baggage of "literary" effects. He who had worked so successfully in the field of the poetic legendary and historic drama; who had fashioned that mighty trilogy Brand, Peer Gynt, and Emperor and Galilean, saw that a newer rubric must be found for the delineation of modern men and women, of modern problems. So style is absent in his later plays — style in the rhetorical sense. Revolutionist as he is, he is nevertheless a formalist of the old school in his adherence to the classic unities. In Hedda Gabler the action is compressed within a space of about thirty-six hours, in one room, and with a handful of persons. One is tempted to say that the principal action occurs before the play or "off" the stage during its progress. We may see that Hedda does little throughout. Yet, through some magical impartment of the dramatist, we seem to be in possession of the characteristic facts of her nature before she arrives on the scene. Concision does not alone explain

this, it may be noticed in other plays of the Norwegian. It is the dramaturgic gift raised to its highest power, though that power be expended upon base metal. Why Ibsen preferred a Hedda to an Isolde is a question that would lead us into devious paths.

In Hedda Gabler all lyricism is sternly suppressed. As if the master had determined to punish himself for his championing of individualism in his earlier plays, he draws the portrait of one who might easily figure as a Nietzschean Super-Woman. Preaching that the state is the foe of the individual, that only revolution — spiritual revolution — can regenerate society, that the superior man and woman are lonely, that individual liberty must be fought for at all hazards, — liberty of thought, speech, action, — Ibsen then deliberately shows the free woman, one emancipated from the beliefs of her family circle and her country. She epitomizes the latter-day anti-social being and is rightfully considered by psychologists as a flaming sign of the times, a brief for the social democrats.

With remorseless logic and an implacable analysis Ibsen discovers to our gaze this bare soul. We see Hedda at school, a discontented, restless girl, envious of her companions, conscious of her own superiority, mental and physical, cruel and overbearing. Little, timid Thea Rysing, with the crown of white-gold hair, wavy, copious, excites anger in the breast of the badly balanced Hedda. She pulls the hair and would

delight to see it burn. After all, is she not General Gabler's daughter, an aristocrat, though a poor one! She goes into society and has admirers. Few attract her. They are either too stupid or not rich enough. In this dangerous predicament, jelly-like and drifting, she encounters Eiljert Lövborg, a young man of genius — at least Ibsen says he is; he has certainly the temperament of erratic genius, though at no time does he betray the possession of higher gifts. Yet an interesting man, a romancing idealist, a deceiver of himself as well as of the women before whom he masquerades and poses in the rôle of the misunderstood and persecuted. He is first cousin to Hjalmar Ekdal in The Wild Duck, one of those egotists of the self-pitying, elegiac kind who weeps when he regards in the mirror his own sentimental features.

Despite her hardness, vanity, selfishness, Hedda is taken in by this clever fellow. Like Emma Bovary (though socially more elevated) she is at heart an incorrigible romantic and very snobbish. Modish elegance is her notion of the universe, and a saddle horse with a man in livery discreetly following her as she dashes through the crowded park represents to her the top notch of mundane happiness. Lövborg is a born liar. He has personal address, is undoubtedly a man of brains, and dissipated as he is manages to surround his loose living with the halo of Byronism. His debauches, he believes, are the result of a finely strung nature

in conflict with a prosaic world. Hedda sympathizes with this view. She does more. She becomes morbidly interested in his doings and asks imprudent questions which the man rightfully construes as evidences of desire for the life he describes. He makes his first error. It is Hedda's opportunity and she avails herself of it. Naturally theatric, she seizes her father's pistol — there is a brace of old cavalry pistols which play an important rôle throughout — and threatens Lövborg. He leaves her and pretends that he is going to the dogs, but in reality quits the city and takes a position in a country family, there to find a more credulous victim, Thea, now the wife of Sheriff Elvsted.

Remember that these experiences are not shown on the stage. Deftly conveyed by the dramatic stenography of Ibsen, the audience absorb the facts almost unconsciously; and when the curtain falls on Act II, we seem to have known the Gablers, Tesmans, Lövborg, and Thea for years. And all the time Ibsen is not overstepping the traditional territory of the drama; his Lövborg and Hedda, his Thea and George, his Brack — are they not, in their relative position, stock figures for any classic comedy? George Tesman is own brother to Georges Dandin and twin to Charles Bovary. He belongs to that large army of husbands called by Balzac "the predestined." His beard, eyes, nose, — above all his nose, — speech, gait, clothes, are they not so many stigmata of the

man whose wife will deceive him? The beauty of the situation is that Hedda does not betray George, and yet she seems more criminal than the timid Thea, who boldly deserts her old husband to follow the scapegrace Lövborg. Hedda is the woman on the brink, the adulteress in thought, the eternal type of one whose will is weakened by egoism. Her soul, its roots nurtured in rank soil, has expanded secretly into a monstrous growth. Her whole life has been one of concealment. She has lied, presumably, in her girlhood, as she lies in the married state. She is never happy except when teasing a man. Laura Marholm paints her portrait as the *détraquée:* "Her wanton curiosity, her constant longing, inflame the decadent and appeal directly to his sensuality; but her cowardice and disinclination to satisfaction drive her forever from attack to flight, and no sooner has she retreated than she stretches forth her antennæ and gropes for him again. To see man feverish — that is what she lives upon; if she cannot have this atmosphere about her, she becomes sallow, hollow-cheeked, and hysteric."

Here is Hedda Gabler sketched in a few words. A cold heart, a cool head, curious but not sensual, combined with a cowardly fear of the conventions — a snobbish tribute to virtues in which she does not believe — these sent Hedda Gabler to her destruction, to that Button-moulder who fashions anew the souls of the useless in his cosmic dust-heap. She went through her life

with the chip of chastity on her shoulder; yet dare a man approach her and she is in the throes of mock virtue. She made Lövborg feel this. Brack, with the measuring eye of a worldly man, was not deceived by her tantrums; he saw the essential baseness of the creature.

Hedda stands for a certain order of her sex — not the "strong-minded" or "advanced" — that is, happily, in the minority. In Ibsen's judgment she is doomed to failure because she did not dare far enough. She feared to sin, not because of scrupulosity, but because of the world's opinion. If she ever allowed tender feelings to usurp the hard image of herself enthroned in her soul, they were for Lövborg. He struck in her a depraved chord of feeling. Both loved pleasure. Both took the seeming for actuality. If there is one thing that discredits Lövborg's claim as a man of genius, it is his worship of trivial things. The scholar, the philosopher, the poet, seek pleasure, seek the gratification of the senses; but Lövborg's attitude is too base. He is worthy of Hedda's admiration, and Hedda's only.

With his incomparable irony Ibsen gives the victory to the weak, to the stupid. We may foresee the future of George and Thea when the shock of battle has passed. Both, dull persons, plodding, painstaking, absolutely devoid of humour, settle down to a peaceful existence over the "great" work of the dead Lövborg. It is

all piteous, all hopelessly banal — and it is also daily life to its central core.

To assert that Hedda's acts were alone the result of her condition would be to place the drama within the category of the pathologic. Rather is the point made that, *despite* her approaching motherhood, Hedda's manifest disgust at any reference to it is a sign of her deep-seated depravity. She loathes children, especially a child of Tesman. She is too selfish to enter, even imaginatively, into the joys of maternity. Ibsen notes this when he puts into George's mouth the silly speech about young wives and the burning of the manuscript. Hedda is, on the contrary, less hysterical and more self-contained after marriage than before. Nothing could be more damnably cold-blooded than her deliberate manipulation of Lövborg's vain nature. Only at the grate as she burns the manuscript and in the outburst of wild music preceding her suicide are the demoniac forces of her nature unloosed.

The former act is, nevertheless, controlled by a slow, cautious hate, and the latter occurs off the stage ; the pistol shot is the final punctuation mark to this destructive, restless existence. No, Ibsen aimed at something more profound than exhibition of maternal hysteria. The causes of Hedda's behaviour dated back to her girlhood. She was perverse, how perverse we see in her shameless confession that she had led George to an avowal simply because she wanted the com-

fortable Falk villa for a residence. Her revolt against life was bounded by her petty appetites, nothing more; and for this reason she is an invaluable "human document."

Removed from her cramping environments Hedda would have developed along more normal lines; and herein lies the beauty of Ibsen's problem, Ibsen who always asks questions — like Rembrandt in his Night Watch with its mystic daylight. Hedda might have become an actress or a circus rider, anything less evil than her position as the trouble-breeding wife of Tesman. By enclosing her within the Tesman walls, surrounding her with stupid and dissipated people, she was driven in upon herself, and passing from one mood of exasperation to another she finally became shipwrecked. As Allan Monkhouse writes, "Hedda Gabler is a personification of ennui, a daring effort of imagination, a great piece of construction, a study of essentials with all accidental human element omitted, a work indeed not of realism, though surrounded by realistic details, but belonging rather to such ideal art as the Melancholia of Albert Dürer." Mr. Monkhouse could have quoted La Bruyère about "opposition truths that illuminate one another." Hedda Gabler is one of those "opposition truths" that illuminate an entire section of her sex.

Technically, Ibsen has not surpassed himself in this work. Never has he woven his patterns so densely — the pattern of character and the

pattern of action. As in a dream we divine the past of the humans he sets strutting before us, and we leave the theatre as if obsessed by an ugly nightmare. Those who condemn the characters are compelled perforce to admire the cunning workmanship, and no greater error can be committed than supposing the two may be disentangled. Study carefully the play, study carefully its performance, and then despair at separating the characterization from the purely formal elements. Here matter and manner are merged perfectly. We note a few symbolic catchwords, such as "vine leaves," but they serve their spiritual as well as their technical purpose. The pistols, too, are cunningly prepared agents of ruin. We also wonder why George is such a blind fool; why Thea so soon consoles herself, with Lövborg's body still warm; why Lövborg, who despises Tesman, should be anxious to show him his new work. But, to quote Mr. James again: "There are many things in the world that are past finding out, and one of them is whether the subject of a work had not better have been another subject. We shall always do well to leave that matter to the author; he may have some secret for solving the riddle, so terrible would his revenge easily become if he were to accept a responsibility for his theme." And further: "The 'use' of Hedda Gabler is that she acts on others, and that even her most disagreeable qualities have the privilege, thoroughly undeserved doubtless,

but equally irresistible, of becoming a part of the history of others. And then one isn't so sure that she is wicked, and by no means sure that she is disagreeable. She is various and sinuous and graceful, complicated and natural; she suffers, she struggles, she is human, and by that fact exposed to a dozen different interpretations, to the importunity of our suspense. . . ."

This seems to be a final judgment — if judgments of Ibsen can be final — upon a woman, who, all said, is human enough to suffer, suffer principally because she feared to sin. She is not a caricature of the "modern" woman. If she had become conscious of the claims of others, in a word the modern, unselfish, emancipated woman, her life would have been different — and the theatre deprived of a most fascinating and enigmatic figure, with her pallid skin, her haunting gray eyes, her sweet, studied languor, and her delicate air of one to whom life owes its richest gifts.

Dr. Wicksteed, in his admirable lectures on Ibsen, remarks: "I am convinced that it is in this typical significance of marriage, and not in any special interest in the so-called woman question as such, that we are to seek the reason of Ibsen's constant recurrence to this theme Suppress individuality and you have no life; assert it, and you have war and chaos. . . . Hedda Gabler neither drifted nor was forced into marriage, but she deliberately and shame

lessly paid the flattered and delighted Tesman in the forged coinage of love for opening to her a retreat from the career she had exhausted, and entry into the best career she could still think of as possible, and we see the result. Without the spirit of self-surrender, free choice will never secure self-realization."

Her death, sought because of cowardly reasons, is yet the one real fact in Hedda's shallow, feverish existence. Death could alone solve the discords of her life's cruel music.

XIV

THE MASTER BUILDER

(1892)

The doctor of the madhouse at Cairo, in which Peer Gynt crowns himself Emperor of Himself, said of his "patients": "Each one shuts himself up in the cask of self, plunges down deep in the ferment of self. He's hermetically sealed with the bung of self, and he tightens the staves in the well of self. None has a tear for another's woes, none has a sense for another's ideas. Ourselves — that's what we are in thought and in speech; ourselves to the outmost plank of the springboard."

Such a sealed soul was that of Halvard Solness before Hilda Wangel knocked at his door to demand of him the fulfilment of his promise. Ten years earlier he had promised to make her

a princess. She was then a child and had excitedly waved a flag when she saw Solness in the pride of his manhood, the greatest of the architects, climb to the top of the scaffolding that surrounded the newly completed church and hang a wreath on the weather-vane. Her enthusiasm had pleased the artist, and a kiss was given with the promise. Her knock is as revolutionary as the open door of Nora's house of dolls. As Hilda enters she brings with her brilliant young womanhood, the fresh breeze of the new century. It was needed in the unhappy Solness household.

Halvard lost his former home through a fire; it was the beginning of his luck in life and also the date of his unhappiness. His children died soon after the affair, and his wife's mind became morbid over the loss.

"Is it not frightful," he tells Hilda, "that I must now go about and reckon it up, pay for it? — not with money, but with human happiness. And not merely my own; with that of others, too. Do you see *that*, Hilda? That is what my artistic success has cost me — and others. And every livelong day I must go about and see the price paid for me anew. Again, and again, and still again."

Several fixed ideas haunt this man's brain. He has become moody, even surly, because he suspects the younger generation of treason to him. As he supplanted old Brovik, the broken-down architect in his employ, so he fears

that the son, Knut Brovik, will supplant him. He has, being a man loved by women, won power over Knut's betrothed. He believes that he has the rare gift of willing a thing, a telepathic power. He is not mad but overwrought, and Hilda's visit is in the nature of a rescue. *She* is the fairy princess who is to rescue him from the evil Ego, in which he is imprisoned as if in an ogre's cage.

Georg Brandes writes of The Master Builder: "It gives at one and the same time a sense of enthralment and a sense of deliverance. This is a play that echoes and reëchoes in our minds long after we have read it. . . . Great is its art, profound and rich in its symbolic language. . . . Ibsen's intention has been to give us by means of real characters, but in half-allegorical form, the tragedy of a great artist who has passed the prime of life."

And as the Danish critic aptly remarks, in his — Ibsen's — case, "Realism and symbolism have thriven very well together for more than a score of years. The contrasts in his nature incline him at once to fidelity, to fact, and to mysticism." This accounts in part for the puzzling *naïveté* of the dialogue, externally so simple that it delights children. Symbolic figures are employed throughout, with repetitions of motives as in a symphonic composition. These buttress up a structure that might otherwise dissolve in fantastic smoke, so aërial is its thesis.

The various acts are mainly composed of a

duologue between Hilda and Halvard. Gradually she obtains by her terrible intensity and child-like belief in him complete control of his self-absorbed will. She drives him to sign a letter of praise for the youthful architect, Knut, *his* possible rival; she sends the other girl away; she is kind to Aline, the unhappy wife. Hilda is, as Ibsen said, a *reversed* Hedda Gabler. She has much of Rebekka West in her, with added youth and a nature buoyant enough to triumph over the Solness ideals, just as she would have compelled Rosmersholm to go down into the world and ennoble men. She discovers Solness's intention to build no more, to climb no more to the top of high turrets. It pains her to think that her part, her master builder, the incarnation of her maidenly dreams, dares no longer mount in company with his ideals. He will build no more churches, only houses for human beings. There may be a castle in the air where he will find his happiness — with Hilda.

"I'm afraid you would turn dizzy before we got halfway up," she says.

"Not if I can mount in hand with you, Hilda," he replies.

"Then let me see you stand free and high up." But alone, he must mount to the top of the new tower. She urges him after the manner of Peter Skule in The Pretenders, as did Rebekka in Rosmersholm. She will not stand between Aline and Halvard, for she now knows

Aline. Otherwise her moral life is as free as Nietzsche's. So Solness marches up the scaffolding, up the ladder to the very pinnacle, forgetting that life has but one pinnacle to scale, and never a second. Her ecstasy as she watches him reach the top, be once more the old genius, his real self, Halvard Solness, that she cheers him and — he falls. Unconscious that he is dead, apparently not caring for the woe brought to this house, Hilda calls out until the curtain hides her from view: —

"*My — my* master builder!" And he is really hers, for she has created his soul anew. That is the meaning of this difficult and lovely fable, — though he fell to his death, Solness once more stood alone on the heights.

Maurice Maeterlinck has written most clearly on the theme of this play.

"Some time ago," he says in The Treasure of the Humble (translated by Alfred Sutro), "when dealing with The Master Builder, which is the one of Ibsen's dramas wherein the dialogue of the second degree attains the deepest tragedy, I endeavoured, unskilfully enough, to fit its secrets. . . . 'What is it,' I asked, 'what is it that, in The Master Builder, the poet has added to life, thereby making it appear so strange, so profound, so disquieting, beneath its trivial surface? The discovery is not easy, and the old master hides from us more than one secret. It would even seem as though what he has wished to say were but little by the side of what he has

been compelled to say. He has freed certain powers of the soul that have never yet been free, and it may be that these have held him in thrall.'

"'Look you, Hilda,' exclaims Solness, 'look you! There is sorcery in you, too, as there is in me. It is this sorcery that imposes action on the powers of the beyond. And we *have* to yield to it. Whether we want to or not, we *must*. There is sorcery in them as in us all.' Hilda and Solness are, I believe, the first characters in drama who feel, for an instant, that they are living in the atmosphere of the soul; and the discovery of this essential life that exists in them, beyond the life of every day, comes fraught with terror. Hilda and Solness are two souls to whom a flash has revealed their situation in the true life. . . . Their conversation resembles nothing that we have ever heard, inasmuch as the poet has endeavoured to blend in one expression both the inner and outer dialogue. A new, indescribable power dominates this somnambulistic drama. All that is said therein at once hides and reveals the sources of an unknown life."

A true interior drama then is The Master Builder, full of the overtones, the harmonies, of mundane existence. Never has Ibsen's art been so clairvoyant.

XV

LITTLE EYOLF

(1894)

Little Eyolf is a moving drama of resignation. It does not sparkle with the gem-like brilliancy of Hedda Gabler, it is not so swiftly dramatic, nor has it the sombre power of Ghosts, nor yet the intimacy of A Doll's House; but it is profoundly pathetic, and the means employed by Ibsen to produce his greatest effects are simple in the extreme.

The story is this: Alfred Allmers has married a girl with "gold and green forests"; Rita is her name. They have one child, Eyolf, a sweet little boy, but lame from a fall. The sister of Allmers is named Asta. She has the true savour of the Ibsen woman. She visits the Allmers at their country home. Alfred has just come back from an excursion of six weeks in the mountains, a lonely, self-imposed tour. He is a delicate young man of lofty ideals, not as yet realized in his work. There is something incomplete about him. He reminds one a trifle of Hedda Gabler's husband, but while he is about as talented he is not quite so dense. He has a life work, a volume to be written, which he calls Human Responsibility. But he is a dreamer and has done little with it. He is wrapped up in his boy and dedicates his life to him. In Little Eyolf shall happily blossom all

the painful buds of his own impotent ambitions Alfred Allmers has the vision, but not the voice. He is a type.

But his wife, a full-blooded, impetuous woman, feels that she is being denied her rights through this absorbing passion of the father for his son. Her nature hungers for more than child love. She loves her husband fiercely and fails to understand his coolness. Then what Ibsen calls a Rat-Wife appears. The Rat-Wife is only a woman with a dog that goes about catching and killing rats. Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, she plays upon a little pipe and the rats follow her to the water and are drowned. "Just because they want not to — because they're so deadly afraid of the water — that's why they've got to plunge into it," says this horrid old beldame of the naughty perverse rodents. She has lured other game — human game — in her early days, and Little Eyolf is transfixed by her glittering eye, as Coleridge hath it.

He follows her music as far as the water and is drowned. The act is vital and searching in its analysis of character. With a few powerful strokes we get Rita, Asta, Alfred, the Rat-Wife; and the poor lame chap, with his hankering after a soldier's life, is very sad.

The contention between Alfred and Rita, husband and wife, in the next act, goes to the very springs of their souls. We learn that Rita is jealous of her little boy — the dead, drowned boy, whose open, upturned, and staring eyes

haunt her. Alfred upbraids her for her neglect of the child, and declares that he would be alive if it were not for her carelessness. Being lame he was not taught to swim like other lads, and the lameness was caused by a fall from a table. Rita had left him asleep on the table, safe as she thought, and then the accident occurred. The husband protests in a low voice that he too forgot, "You, you, you, lured me to you — I forgot the child — in your arms."

The two lay bare their very thoughts. Alfred has really never loved Rita. Her gold and green forests and her beauty led him to marry her. His craze for the boy further removed him from his wife, and his intellectual life was not conducive to perfect sympathy. He wished his lad to be a prodigy. He meant him to do in the world all the father had not. The scene is a poignant one. The mother, very human woman of considerable temperament, is almost broken-hearted at the double loss. The child's death was a blow, but her husband's dislike drives her frantic. The child, young as he was, had repelled her. She felt barred from the wealth of love that flourished between father and child. She resented it. She resented the child's love for Asta, for Asta proves to be a very formidable factor in the play. She is jealous of everybody.

Alfred Allmers is just a bit of a prig, self-conscious like most people with a self-imposed mission in life, and doubtless possessing in full

measure the scholar's peevishness. The sister Asta is a woman with an awful secret. She can give her suitor Borgheim no hopes. She loves her brother's child to distraction, and she knows of her mother's dishonour. To Rita she is not altogether sympathetic. She takes from her Eyolf's love, the love he should have bestowed on his mother, and she is evidently held in high intellectual favour by her husband. Naturally Rita, who has lifted up both the Allmers by her wealth, feels all this. She confesses it, too, to her husband. He has become morbid, unmanned, hysterical, since the accident. All his hopes are dashed to earth and shattered. He conceives a horrible fear for his wife. The interview is a prolonged one and intensely painful. It is written with supreme art and conveys volumes in half-uttered sentences. There are no really long speeches, the dialogue being crisp, and while the action is not rapid, three lives' histories are told with consummate art and unabated vigour.

Asta has then a scene with her brother. She tells him that she is not his sister; her mother was not all she should have been to his father. Brother and sister face each other, and their parting at the end of the act is another of those strangely affecting climaxes Ibsen builds so well. There is never shown a hint of warmer feelings between the two than their supposed relationship warrants. Eyolf, Eyolf! it is always the spirit of the child that directs the doings of this strange yet ordinary group of human beings.

Allmers later suggests suicide to his wife, and the awful contingency is discussed. The tone of Little Eyolf is distinctly optimistic. Hope is preached on every page. Alfred and Rita clasp hands and take up their life work as it lies before them in the squalid village that belongs to them. Asta goes away with Borgheim, leaving a flavour of the mystic behind her. She is a true Ibsen girl. Little Eyolf is the lodestar of Allmers ever after. The play seems on its surface to be a powerful preachment against dilettanteism. Writing a book about Human Responsibility is all well enough, but out in the thick of the fight is a man's place. Assume the responsibilities of common humanity. Do not talk about them. The relations of parents to children are fully exploited, and the lesson read is that parents owe much to each other, quite as much as to their children.

Ibsen has girded at the conventionalities of the marriage relation in other plays. This is his Kreutzer Sonata. He shows the selfishness of a parent's love. Rita and Alfred confess that they never truly understood Eyolf, for they never knew each other. It is a profound character study. Ibsen was writing for another theatre — the theatre of the twentieth century. He has, like Maeterlinck, abjured the drama of poison, mystery, conflict, violence, aye, even the drama of heroism. He is a sorcerer who reveals to us the commonplace of life in other symbols. We are surrounded by mystery. Life at its lowest

term is a profound mystery. Science may tabulate, but the poet draws aside the veil.

To dip below the surface of Ibsen's lines is never a grateful task, especially if the dramatic idea is first taken into consideration. Psychology must play the principal rôle in any estimate of Little Eyolf as a play pure and simple. Language is symbolic, though with Ibsen the single word is never as important as it is with Maeterlinck. So we find little of that dripping repetition, that haunting reiteration which the Belgian writer may have borrowed from Edgar Allan Poe. The ellipsis in Ibsen is cunningly contrived, he subtly foreshadows coming events, but never by the Word Beautiful. Little Eyolf depicts the tyranny of passion.

XVI

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

(1896)

There is in John Gabriel Borkman logical, well-knit construction. There is an unflinching criticism of life — the attitude of a man who began life as a poet and ends it as a realist; there is a strange power, unpleasant power, a meagre intensity, yet unquestionable intensity, and a genius for character-drawing and development of character that is just short of the marvellous. That Ibsen has chosen his characters from the world about him — a provincial, narrow,

hard, cold world, — is a commentary on his truthfulness, on his adherence to realistic principles. The curious part of this is the resemblance his bourgeois people bear to the bourgeois of nearly every civilized country.

John Gabriel Borkman is a play of great power, of a frugal, constructive beauty, and in it from first to last there sounds faintly but distinctly an antique note. There is also something of a Hamlet situation in the position of the young man who might have won back his father's kingdom, but quite like a modern Hamlet solved the knotty problem by going away to Paris; any place, far away from the bleak northern world where lived in a gloomy house his father, an ex-convict, his mother, a soured fanatic, and his aunt, an old maid and an idealist.

John Gabriel Borkman, thirteen years previous to the opening of the play, had been a gigantic speculator. All Norway, all the world, would have been at his feet if he had not failed at the moment when success seemed assured. By his downfall hundreds were enmeshed in ruin, and the man went to prison for five years, leaving behind a heartbroken wife and a young son. This boy, Erhart, was taken away and raised by a rich aunt, but is now at home, where he has lived for eight years when the curtain rises.

Mrs. Borkman is discovered in her old-fashioned drawing-room, in the house saved out of the wreckage by her twin sister, Ella Rentheim. She is longing for the return of her son Erhart,

in whom she discerns the saviour of the family. Her sister enters, and in his own remarkable, sharp way Ibsen lets us witness the spiritual tragedy in the lives of the pair. They both love Erhart, as formerly Ella had loved his father, John Gabriel Borkman. The women hate each other, and their duel is fought out in half-uttered sentences, pregnant pauses, and deadly glances. It is the perfection of dialogue-writing and clear exposition. You catch dim perspectives of the past, the treachery of the husband of Mrs. Borkman, and of darker depths which are later explored. The mother — oh, such a pitiful, harsh, sorrowful, repellent mother, nursing her injuries until they become hissing vipers in her bosom — defies her sister to win away the love of her son, that son she has dedicated to the mission of rehabilitating the fortunes and good name of the Borkmans. With cutting humility she acknowledges that she eats the bread of her sister's charity, and then they hear footsteps. Is it Erhart returning? No; it is some one up in the long gallery overhead! It is the ex-convict, ex-banker, and swindler, John Gabriel Borkman, who has never left the house since his release eight years before. Mrs. Borkman cries: —

"It sometimes seems more than I can endure — always to hear him up there walking, walking. From the first thing in the morning to the last thing at night. And one hears every step so plainly! I have often felt as if I had a sick wolf up there, prowling up and down in a cage.

Right over my head, too! Listen! there he goes. Up and down, up and down, the wolf is prowling."

Then Erhart, a lively young man of about twenty-three, enters, welcomes his aunt affectionately, his mother carelessly. With him is a Mrs. Wilton, a beautiful young woman, whose husband has deserted her. The pair are in love, although the mother does not quite see it. Mrs. Wilton wishes Erhart to go with her to a neighbor's house, a Mr. Hinkle's, but his duty is at home and she leaves him, the air being promise-crammed with tantalizing hopes of pleasure and caprice. The young man soon tires of the bickerings about him, and after declaring that his aunt should be in bed after her long journey, leaves his mother alone, and as the curtain falls she exclaims: "Erhart, Erhart, be true to me! Oh, come home and help your mother! For I can bear this life no longer."

Her mother's heart tells her that her boy is being drawn away from her, drawn by some force she cannot analyze.

In Act II we get a picture of the "sick wolf up there," John Gabriel Borkman himself. He is one of Ibsen's most veracious portraits. He clings with unshaken obstinacy to the belief that he only sinned against himself, that if he had been given time, that if he had not been betrayed by a false friend, he would have pulled through. All these facts are deftly brought out by conversation with the half-pathetic, half-ludi-

crous figure of an humble bank clerk, the only one of Borkman's friends who has clung to him in his reverses, although Borkman has swept away his poor earnings. The contrast of the pair — Borkman, almost satanic in his pride and his belief that he will eventually regain his position in society, and the feeble aspirations of the poor clerk, who is a poetaster — is wonderfully managed. There is a quarrel, and Borkman is left to his gloomy thoughts, and then Ella Rentheim comes in and one of the most powerful situations of the play ensues.

It has developed that Borkman has always loved Ella, but gave her up and married her sister because an influential man who could advance his interests was also in love with Ella. This man, not being able to marry her, betrayed Borkman and his schemes. His name is Hinkle, and at his very house that night, near Christiania (the scene of the play), Erhart Borkman is enjoying himself with Mrs. Wilton and not caring a rap for his sick-souled father, mother, and aunt.

When Borkman finally acknowledges to Ella that in his lust for power he has sacrificed his love of her, and has sacrificed it uselessly, she turns on him and cries "Criminal!" She goes on: —

"You are a murderer and you have committed the one mortal sin. . . . You have killed the love life in me. Do you understand what that means? The Bible speaks of a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness. I have never

understood what it could be; but now I understand. The great, unpardonable sin is to murder the love life in a human soul. . . . You have done that. I have never rightfully understood until this evening what has really happened to me. That you deserted me and turned to Gunhild instead — I took that to be mere common fickleness on your part, and the result of heartless scheming on hers. I almost think I despise you a little in spite of everything. But now I see it! You deserted the woman you loved! Me, me, me! What you held dearest in the world you were ready to barter away for gain. That is the double murder you have committed! The murder of your own soul and mine!"

And again, "You have cheated me of a mother's joy and happiness in life — and a mother's sorrows and tears as well."

Then Ella tells Borkman that sorrow and disease have broken her down, and she intends leaving her fortune to Erhart, the only one she loves; her spiritual son, but he must give up the name of Borkman and take that of Rentheim. Mrs. Borkman appears at this juncture, and there is another clash as the curtain falls on three wretched people.

Act III treads closely on the heels of the preceding one, for the action of the entire play takes place during one dull winter's evening; and if there is unity of time, unity of place, there is unity of character, for like some vast but closely knitted polyphonic composition, the

piece contains not a line, not a character, that is wasted or undeveloped. It is as far as form simply magnificent; an object lesson to young dramatists. But as to its theme; ah, I, too, would be sorry to see our stage always filled with these crabbed, sour, mean, loveless, and sad-visaged people! Little wonder that joyous Erhart Borkman, the selfish son of a union barren of love, goes away in Act III, after a climax that simply cuts into your nerves. Father and mother — oh, the agony of that poor, old, weak, deserted woman — appeal to him, but with Mrs. Wilton and a young girl, a daughter of the old clerk, he goes out into the world to see life, to seek love, to enjoy, to enjoy, to enjoy! It is the new laughing at the despair of the old, and the curtain falls on a group that seems frozen with antique grief.

Of Act IV and Borkman's death — his soul had been dead since he went to prison — I shall say but little. The end is silver-tipped with symbolical hintings, but there is nothing dark or devious for even the commonest comprehension.

The spiritual director of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre, M. Lugné-Poë, once wrote of Ibsen thus: —

"I do not know any one but M. August Ehrhard who has, with such painstaking erudition, disengaged Ibsen's thought from his principal works. And although the learned critic committed the great fault of never attempting

one single time to assimilate the rugged thought of the great dramaturge, it must, nevertheless, be allowed his conclusions were happy. I may cite this phrase from the letter to Ibsen which terminates his volume, 'In truth you will renew the miracle of Sophocles — at eighty years of age you will give us a new Œdipus.'

"To-day that which Ehrhard prophesied is already three-quarters realized. Since Hedda Gabler, Ibsen has given us The Master Builder, that heroic drama of pride, and John Gabriel Borkman, the secular legend of the human chimera."

Even an indifferent performance which I saw at the Schiller Theatre, Berlin, could not quite destroy the impression of a wounded Titan struggling against fate. John Gabriel Borkman is a prodigious figure, a second Mercadet, but fashioned by a Balzac of the theatre.

XVII

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKE

DRAMATIC EPILOGUE

(1899)

Mr. William Archer sees in this closing drama of the social series little else than a resuscitation of the characters and motives that have done duty in his earlier plays. It is true that there is much familiar music, that the themes

have been treated in the previous works; nevertheless the variation is of enthralling interest. This epilogue is closely related to The Master Builder. Solness the architect is differentiated from Arnold Rubek, the sculptor in character; but both men are successful artists; both men have failed in the one achievement worth the while — love. As in Brand, Rubek goes to the snow-covered heights with his only love — Brand's was an ideal; Rubek's is a woman — and the avalanche sweeps both to eternity. The *Deus caritatis*, whose voice thunders in the ears of the dying Brand, is in the epilogue the voice of the sister of mercy who cries, *Pax vobiscum*, as Rubek and Irene are whirled away.

Ibsen, always disdainful of stage setttings, evidently experienced a change of mind, for, following Richard Wagner's example, he makes some exceedingly severe demands upon the ingenuity of the stage manager, beginning with The Lady from the Sea and John Gabriel Borkman.

The story of When We Dead Awake is simplicity itself. Arnold Rubek is a famous sculptor, in middle years married to Maja, a young woman full of the joy of life. The union proves unhappy. She is frivolous; he is failing as an artist. Years before he had designed his masterwork, The Day of Resurrection, and his model was the most beautiful woman in the world. The artist conquered the man and he

allowed Irene to leave him, though she adored him. With her departure his fount of inspiration dried up. He made portrait busts and revenged himself on the indifferent world by maliciously modelling resemblances to ignoble animals in the countenances of his sitters — the pig, the goat, the ape, the hawk, were faintly suggested. This very modern trait has been paralleled in the case of a celebrated painter of our times. Henry James, in his own faultless way, has told the story in The Liar.

As is the case with the Ibsen plays, this train of happenings leads up to the first act at a northern watering-place. Rubek and Maja tell each other the truth of their mutual boredom. Then Irene comes upon the scene, a sinister apparition. She is half mad and is watched by a sister of mercy. She encounters Rubek, and the story of her love, which led to insanity, comes out. He sees that his art has blinded him to his real happiness. Like Ella Rentheim in John Gabriel Borkman, Irene accuses him savagely of murdering her love life through neglect. Maja has gone off with Ulfheim, a savage brute of a hunter, and together Rubek and Irene seek to attain the heights. But the inexorable law of their being bars the way. Only once in a lifetime is it vouchsafed to a man or a woman to touch the tall stars, and so they perish, but not before Rubek has cast off his life lie.

Eduard Brandes, the brother of the better

known Georg, himself a critic and dramatist, has uttered eloquent words about this drama: —

Unquestionably, there will be many objections made against this magnificent drama because the high-sounding prose at times may seem vulnerable to the attack of logical analysis. And it is quite certain that the objections will gather themselves into the pertinent question, Why did Henrik Ibsen show Irene as insane and why does he let Rubek, who is not insane, prefer the abnormal woman to the beautiful and sensible Maja?

To this may be answered, If Ibsen with such violence desired to emphasize that life in its entirety, even the most artistic, is to be counted as death, and that only the life of love is real love, to both Irene and Maja, then he was forced to employ the most drastic pictures of the kind of death that life without love assuredly is. Insanity, without a doubt, is both mental and physical death: though the insane may exist, yet humanity does not consider such existence — life.

Had not Irene stood there, so heartbroken, so ill in mind and evil, so desirous and yet so afraid, with the black shadow of cell and restraint in her wake, the lesson of the play would not be too plain, Without love — no life.

It is Irene, of course, who is the star character in the play. It is far from being the undecisive Rubek who not until the hour of his death understood the love which Irene offered him, which in Maja's case was confined to the customs of conventional marriage.

That Henrik Ibsen stands untouched by his

weight of years, this drama will ere long announce to the entire world. It is quite true that the structure of the play cannot be analyzed on the spur of the moment. The construction embodies a stage setting which will enhance the worth of the drama. Almost with the identical progress which Irene and Rubek make toward the mountain top the acts unfold themselves lucidly and are entirely comprehensible. The more the psychological problem is studied the better will it be understood why Ibsen is called great.

When We Dead Awake is a master's work and a masterpiece. Like none other is Ibsen — so grand, so mystical, and yet so entirely in agreement with the organic make-up of humanity. From the peak of the mountain he speaks to us, aged as to years, youthful in deed and daring. There is but one ruler, says Henrik Ibsen: the great Eros, and the poet is his prophet!

When We Dead Awake ends the cycle of the noble prose dramas of Henrik Ibsen. Despite Mr. Archer's criticism the play shows little falling off in intensity, even if the motives are thrice familiar. To will greatly is the touchstone of life, to will when you know that you are hedged in by overmastering destiny; to dare, though you know that free will is one of life's darling illusions — that is success in life.

To thy own self be true,

said Shakespeare, and no one has said it with such tragic intensity since him as has Henrik Ibsen.

"It has been a veritable misfortune for Æsthetics that the word 'drama' has always been translated by 'action,'" wrote Nietzsche. "Wagner is not the only one who errs here; all the world is still in error about the matter; even the philologists ought to know better. The ancient drama had grand *pathetic scenes* in view; it first excluded action (relegated it *previous* to the commencement, or *behind* the scene). The word 'drama' is of Doric origin, and according to Dorian usage signifies 'event,' 'history,' both words in a hieratic sense. The oldest drama represented local legend, the 'sacred history,' on which the establishment of the cult rested (consequently no doing but a happening . . .)."

And elsewhere Nietzsche declares: "The affirmation of life, even in its most unfamiliar and most severe problems, the will to *live* life, enjoying its own inexhaustibility in the *sacrifice* of its highest types — *that* is what I call Dionysian, *that* is what I divined as the bridge to a psychology of the *tragic* poet. Not in order to get rid of terror and pity, not to purify from a dangerous passion by its vehement discharge (it was thus that Aristotle understood it), but beyond terror and pity, *to realize in fact* the eternal delight of becoming — that delight which even involves in itself the *joy of annihilation*."

He also pictures the great tragic artist offering a draught of sweetest cruelty to heroic men. Readers interested should study Lessing in his

Hamburg Dramaturgy, Schopenhauer's essay on Tragedy, and Nietzsche's valuable contribution to the discussion, his early work, The Birth of Tragedy. The latter extols the Dionysian spirit of the drama — its ecstasy and its triumphant affirmation of life the eternal. Walter Pater should be consulted on the same lofty theme.

In form the perfected Ibsen tragedy follows Sophocles: anterior to the rising of the curtain the various motives have developed and collided in the dark chamber of the dramatist's brain. They are then incarnated for the spectator as they near their catastrophe; thus the most rigid economy of effects is practised, the three unities preached by Boileau are set before us with unerring logic. It is all in a single picture, this dénouement of his character's silent years. The method has its drawbacks, yet there is no denying its intensity, which like the fiery garment of Nessus envelops the dramatist's unhappy men and women. Determinate as is the motivation of these dramas, there is allowed the interval for action that might be described by the tick of the pendulum, — diastole, systole, ebb, and flow. But within that tiny mental territory man is monarch of his acts; moreover, as Ernest Renan suggests, "What we call infinite time is, perhaps, a minute between two miracles." Man dances on the rope of the present between the past and the future, says Nietzsche; the spectacle, brief as it is, has been recorded by Ibsen.

Renan, who anticipated Nietzsche by his proclamation that man should be virtuous for virtue's sake alone, without regard for rewards attendant upon its performance, has also written in his preface to Caliban (1878):—

"Man sees clearly at the hour which is striking that he will never know anything of the supreme cause of the universe, or of his own destiny. Nevertheless he wishes to be talked to about all that." And Ibsen has talked to us much about all these things, following Goethe's axiom that "no real circumstance is unpoetic so long as the poet knows how to use it." The theatre director in Faust remarks, "He who brings much, brings something to every one."

Octave Uzanne wrote, "People the orchestra and galleries of a theatre with a thousand Renans and a thousand Herbert Spencers, and the combination of these two thousand brains of genius will not produce aught but the soul of a *concierge*."

So much for the power of collectivity. This theme which Gustave Le Bon has treated in The Mob and The Psychology of the Peoples — literally a drag-net psychology — may be found lucidly discussed in Mr. A. B. Walkley's Dramatic Criticism. The modern audience, he says, is no longer a great baby, like the mediæval one, but an intelligent adult. "On this crowd depends our future hopes of the stage."

With all the authorities, apologists, and panegyrists, Ibsen remains a difficult nut to crack. His perversities of execution, aberrations in sentiment, contrarieties, and monumental obstinacy are too much for the average commentator's nerves — why, then, should he be enjoyed by the public when doctors of the drama disagree? His warmest admirers deny him the gift of humour, but we believe that he is the greatest humorist, as well as dramatist, of the nineteenth century. No man, not even Browning, has kept such rigid features in the very face of idiotic abuse and still more silly praise. Not a sense of humour! After A Doll's House came Ghosts, totally contravening the thesis, or supposed thesis, of that problem play; after Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, which declared for the rights of the individual; after this piece the maddening and angular ironies of The Wild Duck, in which he mocks himself, his theories; and then as if to explode the whole Ibsen mine, Rosmersholm appeared. Therein the reformer, whether idealist or of the ordinary peddling political stripe, is mercilessly flayed, and Rebekka West, his wonderful incarnation of passion, deceits, femininity, and renunciation. sacrifices her life to a false ideal, to "Rosmersholm ideals," and mocks herself as she joins in the double suicide. No humour! What, then, of Hedda Gabler, the young woman of to-day; shallow-cultured, her religious underpinning gone, vacillating, cerebral, all nerves.

full of a Bashkirtseff-like charm, this Hedda who is so modern, who peeps over moral precipices, shudders and peeps again — what preconceived theories of Ibsen did Hedda *not* upset?

Followed the fantastic Master Builder, Little Eyolf, John Gabriel Borkman, and When We Dead Awake, each mutually destructive of what we supposed Ibsen stood for, destructive of the fumbling decadent that spite depicts him. Not a humorist! Why, Aristophanes, Jonathan Swift, Dumas *fils*, and Calvin (who was fond of roasting his religious foes) rolled into one is about the happiest formula we can express for the tense-lipped old humorist of Norway!

Like the John Henry Newman of Apologia Pro Vita Sua, his chief concern is with the soul. To call him hard names is to betray the inner anxieties that assail us at some time of our existence. "What if this man were telling the truth?" we shiveringly ask. Then we incontinently proceed to stone him to death with scabrous adjectives!

Ibsen never condescended to newspaper polemics — usually the refuge of second-rate men. And his scorn and cruelty are but a disguised kindness; if he lays bare our rickety social systems, our buckram politics, exposes the *falsetto* of our ideals, the flabbiness of our culture, the cowardice of our ethics, the sleek optimism of our public counsellors, and the dry rot of loveless marriage, it is to blazon our moral maladies that we may seek their cure.

Like John Knox with Mary Stuart, he rudely raps at the door of our hearts, bidding us awaken and open them. He is a voice crying in the wilderness of shams — shams social, the shams of sentiment, of money-getting. And he sometimes fails to discriminate the sheep and goats, tweaking the foolish, self-satisfied noses of the former so sadly, that he has been accused of mixing his moral values. But like Tennyson he knows that there is often honest faith in doubt. His words and works may be compared to that serpent of brass erected by Moses in the midst of his ailing nation, which was at once a symbol and a prophylactic.

Ibsen, the cunning contriver of sinewy, vital dramas, swift in action, with all extraneous flesh lopped away like the muscular figure of a Greek athlete, this Ibsen of overarching poetic power, is a man disdainful of our praise or our blame, knowing, with the subtle prevision of genius, that one day the world will go to him for the consolations of his austere art.

II

AUGUST STRINDBERG

To search for God and to find the Devil! that is what happened to me. — STRINDBERG'S *Inferno*.

A CRITIC is a man who expects miracles. So it has become the general practice to ignore a poet in his totality and seek only for isolated traits. And then the trouble we take to search for what a man is not: the lack of humour in Shelley, the lack of spirituality in Byron, the lack of sanity in Nietzsche, the lack of melody in Richard Strauss! The case of Johann August Strindberg has also proved tempting to critical head-hunters. Long before we read his books we knew of his neurasthenia, and after his reputation as a many-sided man of genius had been established in Europe his matrimonial affairs were employed as an Exhibit A to divorce him from public and critical favour. And yet this poet, romancer, and novelist, who has created such a profusion of types as to be called "The Shakespeare of Sweden," this more than countryman of Swedenborg in his powers of intense vision, this seer and chemist, possesses such a robust, tangible personality that the world

is hardly to be censured for being curious about the man before studying his works.

His stock stems from the very soil of Sweden. In the seventeenth century his ancestors were living in the little village of Strinne. Tremendous in physique and intermingled with clerical strains, Strindberg inherits both his big frame and sensitive conscience from his mixed forebears. His is the sanguine scepticism like that of Renan, Anatole France, Barrès, Bernard Shaw, as René Schickele has suggested. A simple pagan he is not; nor would his particular case have been so complicated. His lyric pessimism and his gift of distilling his bitter experiences into a tale or a play are to-day merged in the broad currents of his historical dramas and socialistic novels. Even his misogyny has become ameliorated, — those episodes in which are crystallized the petty misery of a married couple, — unpaid debts, unloved children, the bailiff knocking at the back door! — let us believe that they, too, were but a phase of his development. Played in Germany and France, — Zola hailed his play, Married, as remarkable, and its author as a *confrère*, — popular in Russia, recognized though not without many years of unjust probation, Strindberg may be said to have achieved what he set out to do, — "to search for God and find the devil," and once more to find his God.

Herr Emil Schering, the devoted German translator of Strindberg, related to me this anec-

dote. On the writing-desk of Ibsen there stands, or stood, a photograph of Strindberg the Swede, once Ibsen's foe. To a visitor's surprise, Ibsen, after gazing in silence for some time at the picture, said, "There is one who will be greater than I."

Whether this story be true or not Strindberg is a man of genius, a crazy one at times, fascinating as a writer and interesting as a psychiatric study. And he answers to the chief test of the dramatist — he is a prime creator of character. Edmund Gosse pronounced him to be "certainly the most remarkable creative talent started by the philosophy of Nietzsche"; and in speaking of his novel, Inferno, he says that it "is a record of wretchedness and superstition and squalor, told by a maniac who is a positive Lucifer of the intellect. . . . in France not only has he a large following, but he exercises a positive influence." Yet this erratic man has planned technical revolutions for the dramatic stage — on the mechanical as well as the spiritual side — that are as startling as were Richard Wagner's in the music drama. It is not necessary here to describe his scheme for presenting his long historical dramas without a change of front scene.

Strindberg is a man with an abnormal emotional temperament which he has often allowed to master his judgment. If he had been a composer, while his symphonies would have undoubtedly provoked abuse, they would not have scandalized moralists — such is the peculiar

vagueness of that art in the domain of articulate thought. Some day the tone-symbols of music will become a part of our consciousness, and then we may confidently expect arrests, prosecutions, transportations, perhaps executions. Luckily for the bold and imaginative thinkers, music remains the only art, the last sanctuary wherein originality may reveal itself in the face of fools and not pierce their mental opacity.

August Strindberg is a name little known to the English stage or reading public. Yet his dramatic work dates back to 1872, when Meister Olaf was composed. In this youthful essay he anticipated by seven years the Nora type presented by Ibsen. His first novel appeared in 1879, and in 1884, when Giftas was published, the stories in this violent book nearly sent him to the Stockholm jail. It was 1888 before Gräfin Julie was put forth, and this play originally in three acts brought Strindberg European fame. Gläubiger, in 1889, confirmed the first critical impression that a writer and thinker of a high order was come. Strindberg's career has been a disordered one. Poverty interrupted his studies at the Upsala University, made him a "super" in a theatre, and drove him to journalism, and to become a doctor's assistant. Always unhappy in his relation with women, often quite mad, and usually living on the treacherous borderland of hallucination, his existence has been fevered and miserable, though his successes

are brilliant. Sanity has not been his cardinal quality — he has more than once gone to the asylum, emerging in a few months cured, and, remarkable as it sounds, remembering the details of his mania. *Detraqué*, sick and cracked, he nevertheless plunged into the study of chemistry, searching for a universal solvent — a mad dream that would interest Balzac. Ideas almost consumed the brain of this *cérébral*.

But hard work calmed his nerves, as was the case with Dostoïevsky. Strindberg's scientific investigations are full of the flashes of divination that at times lend value to the theories of imaginative men. He has written an Introduction à une Chimie unitaire, which was favourably received. It was a conclusion foregone that his impulsive and overwrought emotional nature would lead him into extravagances. Inferno and the double drama, Nach Damaskus, reveal his eroticism, his exasperated imagination, his harsh atheism. He has confessed in one of his autobiographical outpourings — for he lays bare his soul with the same naïveté as did Tolstoy and Rousseau — that in his youth he was a believer, that the modulation to free-thinking and rank atheism was an easy one. Then, after a period of turbulence, he became the dispassionate ponderer; and finally socialism, with its remote horizons, its heroisms, its substitution of humanity for the old gods, caught his wandering soul.

He lives no longer in Paris, a whirlpool for a man of his nature, and since his third marriage,

to Harriet Bosse, the popular Swedish actress, called by her admirers the "Scandinavian Duse," he has resided in Stockholm. There his great historical plays have been heard and praised and abused; there he shows in his later writings a mystic strain; there last autumn after some years of exaltation he agreed to separate from his wife, for the clash of two such opposing temperaments "hindered their free development"—so says his faithful biographer. The separation caused much commotion in artistic and dramatic circles. It was, however, a perfectly amicable one; Harriet Bosse declared that she needed more liberty, for she hopes to travel throughout Europe. A laudable ambition. Strindberg, notwithstanding his unhappy unions, is a staunch monogamist, and allowed the woman to go her way. He has already drawn her portrait in the powerful historical play Christine. Therein the soul of the actress is set before us as the counterfeit Queen of Sweden; winning and masculine, flattering and harsh, a heartless demon and a tender maiden begging for sympathy; anon a mocking tyrant, a wild cat, a second Messalina. It would appear that the poet lost no time in studying Fru Strindberg's characteristics. She, on her side, had made a contract with her manager not to appear in any of her husband's plays, though she has enjoyed triumphs in Fräulein Julie and Samum. Perhaps this was the first little rift in the domestic lute.

Biologists believe that after forty a man of genius — who is in Darwinian parlance a *sport* — returns to his tribe; resumes in himself the traits of his parents. Perhaps Strindberg has reached the grand climacteric and may give us less disturbing masterpieces. In 1902, under the title of Elf Einakter, a German translation of eleven of his one-act plays was published. This collection contains the ripest offering thus far of his unquestionable genius. It begins with Gräfin Julie, condensed by the dramatist into a one-act piece. "A tragedy of naturalism," he calls it. It is an emotional bombshell. The social world seems topsy-turvied after a first reading. After a second, while the gripping power does not relax, one realizes the writer's deep, almost abysmal knowledge of human nature. Imagine a Joseph Andrews made love to by a Lady Booby, youthful, fascinating. But Fielding aims light shafts of satire; Strindberg calls up ghosts with haunting eyes. Passion there is, and a horrible atmosphere of reality. You know the affair has happened; you see the valet, Jean, chucking his cook-sweetheart under the chin as she feeds him with dainties in the kitchen; you witness the appearance on the scene of Julie enamoured; frantic, unhappy Julie; and you view the crumbling of her soul, depicted as in one of those drawings of Giulio Romano from which you avert your head. The finale makes Ghosts an entertainment for urchins.

Everything is brought about naturally, inevi-

tably. Be it understood, Strindberg is never pornographic, nor does he show a naked soul merely to afford charming diversion, which is the practice of some French dramatists.

What would our Ibsen-hating critics say after Gräfin Julie or Gläubiger! That kitchen — fancy a kitchen as a battlefield of souls! — with its good-hearted and pious cook, the impudent scoundrel of a valet eager for revenge on his superiors, and the hallucinated girl from above stairs — it is a tiny epic of hatred, of class against mass.

Julie is neurotic. She has coolly snapped the betrothal vows made with a titled young man of the district. It is St. John's Eve. The villa of the Count, Julie's father, is empty save for the two servants, Jean and Christina — the latter is the cook. Julie, bored by her colourless life and fevered by a midsummer's madness, throws herself at the valet's head. He is frightened. His servant nature has the upper hand until the pair, forced to hide because of the intrusion of rough country folk, reappear. Then the male brute is smirking, triumphant. Justin Huntly McCarthy made a translation of the piece for an English magazine in 1892. Here is an excerpt: —

[JULIE *enters, sees the disorder in the kitchen, and clasps her hands. Then she takes a powder puff and powders her face.*]

JEAN. [*Enters excited*] There, you see and you hear. Do you still think it possible to remain here?

JULIE. No, I do not. But what shall we do?

JEAN. Fly; travel; fly away from here.

JULIE. Travel? Yes! But where?

JEAN. To Switzerland, to the Italian lakes. Have you ever been there?

JULIE. No. Is it beautiful?

JEAN. An eternal summer. Orange trees, laurels — ah!

JULIE. But what shall we do there afterwards?

JEAN. We will start a first-class hotel for first-class guests.

JULIE. A hotel!

JEAN. That is the life to live, believe me. Always new faces, new languages, not a moment's leisure for worrying or dreaming, no seeking after employment, for work comes of itself. Night and day the bell rings, the trains whistle, the omnibuses come and go while the gold pieces roll into the till. That is a life to live.

JULIE. That is a life to live. And what of me?

JEAN. You shall be the mistress of the house, the ornament of the firm. With your appearance and your manners we are sure of a colossal success. You sit like a queen in the office and set your slaves in motion with one touch on the electric bell; the guests march past your throne and lay their treasures humbly on the table. You cannot imagine how people tremble when they get a bill. I will salt the accounts and you will sugar them with your most bewitching smile. Yes, let us travel far from here. [*He takes a time-table from his pocket.*] Good. By the next train we are in Malmö at 6.30, in Hamburg at 8.40 to-morrow morning, from Frankfort to Basle in one day, and we are in Como by the St. Gothard route in, let me see, three days. Three days!

JULIE. That is all very fine. But, Jean, you must give me courage. Say that you love me. Come and take me in your arms.

JEAN. [*Hesitating*] I would like to, but I dare not. Not here in this house. I love you without doubt. Can you doubt it?

JULIE. You! Say "thou" to me. Between us there are no longer any barriers. Say "thou."

JEAN. [*Troubled*] I cannot. There are still barriers between us so long as we remain in this house. It recalls the past, it recalls the Count. I have never met any man who compelled such respect from me. I have only to see his glove lying on a table to feel quite small. I have only to hear his bell and I start like a shying horse. And when I look at his boots standing there so stiff and stately, it makes me shiver. [*He pushes the boots away with his foot.*] Superstition, prejudice, which has been driven into us from childhood, but which we can never get free of. If you will only come into another country, into a republic, then people shall kneel down before my porter's livery, people shall kneel down. But I shall not kneel down. I am not born to kneel, for there is stuff in me; there is character in me; and if once I reach the lowest branch, you shall watch me climb. To-day I am a lackey, but next year I am a proprietor; in a few years I shall have an income, and then I run off to Roumania, where I buy a decoration. I can — mark well that I say can — die a count.

JULIE. Beautiful, beautiful!

JEAN. Ah, in Roumania a man can buy a count's title, and then you will be a countess, my countess.

JULIE. What do I care for what I have cast

aside! Say that you love me, or else — ah, what am I else?

JEAN. I will say it a thousand times — later on. But not here. And above all, no hysterics, or all is lost. We must manage the affair quietly, like sensible people. [*He takes out a cigar, cuts the end, and lights it.*] Sit down there, and I will sit here, and then we can chat as if nothing had happened.

JULIE. Oh, my God! Have you no feelings?

JEAN. I! why, there is no one more sensitive than I, but I can command my feelings.

JULIE. A short time ago you would have kissed my shoe, and now —

JEAN. [*Coldly*] Yes, before. But now we have something else to think about.

The scamp sounds her as to the money she possesses. She has none. He compels her to rob her father. He kills her bird. She curses him, for her poor brain is going under from the strain put upon it. She throws herself upon the mercy of the cook; but Christina, who is a good woman, repels and rebukes the sinner. The Count returns. He rings. Jean again becomes the servant, though not until he has given Julie his razor, bidding her use it. She goes out and kills herself, unable to resist the stronger will.

In this shocking drama is crystallized all the bitterness of Strindberg, for he once married a Countess; he, too, has lived in the *Inferno*. Again we say the ending revolts; in comparison, the *coda* of Ibsen's Ghosts is a mild

exercise in emotional *arpeggios*. Strindberg's heavy fist smashes out music, sinister and murderous, in this ruthless play.

Julie is a close study of a girl whose blood is tainted before birth, whose education has been false, whose life in society has inflamed her passions. She falls easily when the cunning Jean tempts her at the psychologic moment. I saw Julie at the Kleines Theatre, Berlin, last autumn, Frau Eysoldt — Sorma suffering from a bruised arm — assuming the title rôle, deciphering with skill the abnormal hieroglyphics of the character.

In Gläubiger, a tragic comedy, Strindberg treats, with his accustomed omniscience, a sweet little story about a man who follows his runaway wife to a seaside resort and becomes acquainted with the new husband — unknown to the lady, who is away for a week. Here we catch a glimpse of another hell, the cruelty of a powerful intellect. The weaker man is a painter, turned sculptor, and — subtle irony — he models only his wife's figure. (This was published in 1889; Ibsen certainly read it — witness When We Dead Awake.) The snaring of the poor emotional wretch's soul is masterly. It is all over in an hour, the entire play, and again we feel as if we had mutely assisted at the obsequies of three human beings.

The first husband — who is discovered as such at the end of the play — meets his former wife, and her infamous nature is exposed. The artist

hears the conversation, and his fate is not to be spoken of lightly. We pass on.

Paria is after a tale of Ola Hansson. It need not detain us. Poe is a child compared to Strindberg in the analysis of morbid states of soul. Samum is a shuddering ode to revenge. Finally we arrive at Die Stärkere, which met with such acclaim on the Continent. Its chief device of having one silent figure and making the other do the talking is sufficiently novel. But it is again the drama, always the drama with Strindberg. His picture, executed by a kindred and sympathetic interpreter, Edvard Munch, shows the face of one who, like Dante, has seen the nethermost hell.

Played by two artistic actresses, this sardonic little sketch, replete with irony, malice, hatred,—yet full of humanity,—would prove most attractive. It has many sly strokes of humour. The scene of the action is a café on Christmas Eve. Madame X talks to Mademoiselle Y, who remains absolutely silent, yet by glances and gestures contrives to send the other woman scudding along the road from idle, amenable chatter to outrageous recrimination. The two women love the same man. Madame X is his wife. Ferociously she exposes her secrets. Her husband at first has forced her to imitate Mademoiselle Y. But she is now the stronger. She has made him forget his early love, who sits in a dreary café alone on Christmas Eve, while she, his legal wife, will go home to the father and children! It is

an ugly episode. In Das Band we reach a play revealing the better characteristics of the poet. It consists only of a court-room scene with jurymen, judge, and officers before whom a husband and wife make their petition for divorce — according to Scandinavian procedure. They are resolved to separate; but there is a child, a son, beloved by both. With this elemental stuff as a subject, Strindberg wrings the heart of you. At the end the parents damn themselves by their own admission, the child is taken from their custody, and they confront each other in the deserted, dim court room, their hearts bursting, their future a foggy, abandoned field. They recall the poet Aldrich's picture of No-man's land, where the soul sees its double, a *doppelgänger*.

> "And who are you?" cried one agape,
> Shuddering in the gloaming light;
> "I know not," said the second shape,
> "I only died last night."

These two souls in the play, once hooked by the steels of marriage and parenthood, realize as they fall loathingly asunder that they are dead, that their life has passed on into the soul of their miserable boy. It is such a play as this that vindicates Strindberg's claim to the mastery of the drama. Here he is at his human best, freed from the bizarre, and his humour and wit illuminate the ghastly darkness with friendly flashes. The jurymen are excellent, and more comical still are the court officers. Many touches throughout would make the translation and per-

formance of Das Band profitable. And not once is the child on the stage. Possibly, as America is a divorce-loving nation, it would reject with indignation the sight of so many bleaching family bones!

Mit dem Feuer Spielen is a comedy of a drastic kind. It shows Nietzsche's influence. The sister of Nietzsche, Frau Förster-Nietzsche, once assured me in Weimar that her brother enjoyed reading Strindberg's novels. And there are several references to Strindberg in the published correspondence of Georg Brandes and Nietzsche.

Debit and Credit also proves that, consciously or unconsciously, Strindberg is a Nietzschean. It is a rogue's comedy with original variations. The chief character evokes laughter, for through the grim and sordid rifts in the plot — it pictures a tawdry great man — we hear bursts of natural fun. There is humour, kindly and mocking. Very Shaw-like, except that it was written in 1892, is Mutterliebe. In Mrs. Warren's Profession, Mr. Shaw expanded the same grewsome idea. Elsewhere the Irish writer calls Strindberg "the only living genuine Shakespearian dramatist." Strindberg in his fifteen pages traverses a lifetime, and his ending is logical.

In the preface to Fräulein Julie, Strindberg makes a general confession—for him as for Tolstoy a psychologic necessity. "Some people," he says, "have accused my tragedy of being too sad, as though one desired a merry tragedy.

People call authoritatively for the Joy of Life, and theatrical managers call for farces, as though the Joy of Life consisted in being foolish, and in describing people who each and every one are suffering from St. Vitus's dance or idiocy. I find the joy of life in the powerful, terrible struggle of life; and the capability of experiencing something, of learning something, is a pleasure to me. And therefore I have chosen an unusual but instructive subject; in other words, an exception, but a great exception, that will strengthen the rules which offend the apostles of the commonplace. What will further create antipathy in some is the fact that my plan of action is not simple, and that there is not one view alone to be taken of it. An event in life — and this is rather a new discovery — is usually accompanied by a series of more or less deep-seated motives; but the spectator usually generally chooses that one which his power of judgment finds simplest to grasp, or that his gift of judgment considers the most honourable. For example, some one commits suicide: 'Bad business!' says the citizen; 'Unhappy love!' says the woman; 'Sickness!' the sick man; 'Disappointed hopes!' the bankrupt. But it may be that none of these reasons is the real one, and that the dead man hid the real one by pretending another that would throw the most favourable light on his memory."

The Father (produced in 1887 and translated into English by N. Erichsen) is in three short

acts. It depicts the destruction of a man's brain through the machinations of his malevolent wife. Strindberg's misogyny is the keynote of his early work. He hates woman. He accuses Ibsen of gynolatry. "My superior intelligence revolts," he cries, "against the gynolatry which is the latest superstition of the free-thinkers." His own married life was so unhappy that he revenges himself by attacking the entire sex. Every book, every play, is a confession. He is the most subjective dramatist and poet of his age. In Comrades he synthesizes the situation: —

To wish to dethrone Man and replace him by Woman — going back to a matriarchy — to dethrone the true master of creation, he who has created civilization and given to the vulgar the benefit of his culture; he who is the generator of great thoughts, of the arts and crafts, of everything, indeed; to dethrone him, I say, in order to elevate "les sales bêtes" of women, who have never taken part in the work of civilization (with a few futile exceptions), is to my mind a provocation to my sex. And at the idea of seeing "arrive" these anthropomorphs, these half apes, this horde of half-developed animals, these women whose intellects are of the age of bronze, the male in me revolts. I feel myself stirred by an angry need of resisting this enemy, inferior in intellect, but superior by her complete absence of moral sense.

In this war to the death between the two sexes it would appear that the less honest and more perverse would come out conqueror, since the chance

of man's gaining the battle is very dubious, handicapped as he is by an inbred respect for woman, without counting the advantages that he gives her in supporting her and leaving her time free to equip herself for the fight.

This sex-against-sex manifesto will not make him popular in America, a land peopled with gynolatrists; but his plays and novels may be read with profit; if nothing else, they illustrate the violent rebound of the pendulum in Scandinavia, where the woman question absorbed all others for a time. Besides, Strindberg is a good hater, and good haters are rare and stimulating spectacles.

Inferno is the very quintessence of Strindberg. Written between two attacks — his unstable nerves send him at intervals into retreat — it is the most awful portrayal of mental suffering ever committed to paper. Poe said in one of his Marginalia that the man who dared to write the story of his heart would fire the paper upon which he wrote. This Strindberg has dared to do with a freedom, a diabolical minuteness, that make the naïve stutterings of Verlaine and the sophisticated confessions of Huÿsmans mere literature. Because of their intensity you are forced to believe Strindberg, though his is only too plainly a pathologic case; the delusions of persecution, of grandeur, of almost the entire lyre of psychiatric woes, are to be detected in this unique book. An enemy, a Russian, haunts him in Paris and plays on the

piano poisonous music which warns the listener that he is doomed. It is the history of Strindberg's quarrel with the Polish poet mystic and dramatist, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, who really tracked the Swede because he was jealous of his own wife. Strindberg once wrote of Maupassant's La Horla, "I recognize myself in that, and do not deny that insanity has developed."

Margit is a five-act drama, with the sub-title La Femme du Chevalier Bengt. It is a historical play of the times of the Reformation, and it is modern in its glacial analysis of the feminine soul. The picture is more various than is the case with the eternal monologue or dialogues of his shorter pieces — and there is humour of a deadly kind. In Das Geheimnis der Gilde (1879–80) the theme of Ibsen's The Master Builder was anticipated. To enumerate the works of Strindberg would consume columns; Herr Schering of Berlin has literally devoted his life to the task of translating them. Already there are forty volumes of plays, tales, novels, essays, monographs, poems, fables. Even in these times of piping versatility, the many-sided activities of the Swede amaze. His Nach Damaskus reveals a tendency to drift Romeward, to that Roman church, the sanctuary for souls weary of the conflict. There is no denying the fact that Strindberg's later productions show a cooler head, steadier nerves, though the motives are usually madness or blood guilt. The latest volume at the time of writing is devoted

to three plays, — Die Kronbraut, Schwanenweiss, Ein Traumspiel. Two of these are powerful and painful. The playwright paints the peasantry of his country with the sombre brush of Hauptmann. Ein Traumspiel is that wonderful thing, a real dream put before us with all the wild irrelevancies of a dream, yet with sober and convincing art. As a stage piece it would be superbly fantastic. Strindberg has a faculty, which he shares in common with E. T. W. Hoffmann and Edgar Poe, of catching the ghosts of his brain at their wildest and pinning them down on paper. In such moods he may be truly called a seer. Swedenborg alone equals him in the veracity and intensity of his visions.

These later plays were admittedly composed during the few happy years with his third wife, Fru Strindberg-Bosse. Edwin Bjorkman, who has written with authority of his fellow-countryman, declares that "the motives that move Strindberg are moral."

"One of his favourite doctrines," continues Mr. Bjorkman, "is that social and individual purity is the only solid foundation for physical and mental health, as well as an indispensable condition of true achievement. He speaks somewhere of an artist 'who was yearning for the summit of ambition without being willing to pay the price required of those who are to reach it.'" And then he adds, "The only choice left us by life is between the laurel and our pleasure."

Further he quotes the dramatist, "I let my-

self be carried away by the heat of the battle [over the woman's emancipation movement, of which he was at that time the only prominent literary antagonist in the Scandinavian countries], and I went so far beyond the limits of propriety that my countrymen feared I had become insane."

An alchemist, a dabbler in spiritualism, a wanderer among the lowly long before Gorky was heard of, Strindberg once wrote to a friend when lack of money kept him a practical prisoner on a small island outside of Stockholm, although his writing-desk was housing the completed manuscripts of six one-act plays and two larger dramas, "I am thinking of becoming a photographer in order to save my talent as a writer."

A later novel is autobiographic. Einsam was published in 1903. It is more reflective than his other books and betrays the loneliness of the returned exile. It registers the poet's dissatisfaction with Lund, to which he went after the tremendous experiences from 1894 to 1898. A most startling play, one of my favourites, is Totentauz. It is a double drama, the shabby hero of which would have pleased the creator of Captain Costigan. His novel Die Gotischen Zimmer (1904) is of socialistic character and contains many eloquent pages. As he was born January 22, 1849, in Stockholm, it will be seen that this erratic man is beginning to reach the cooling period of his genius.

The most vivid of his books, after Inferno, is The Confessions of a Fool (Die Beichte eines Thoren). Strindberg's wife, to marry him, had divorced herself from a baron. Yet the suspicious writer accused her of all the crimes in the calendar. And he also admits that he abused her. Strindberg was suffering from *paranoia simplex chronica*, according to Dr. William Hirsch, whose valuable work, Genius and Degeneration, contains a study of the Swede's case. What is of peculiar interest is the symptom in his malady called "referential ideas." "The patients," says Dr. Hirsch, "refer all that goes on about to themselves. They suspect that the world is leagued against them." For example: when Strindberg first read Ibsen's Wild Duck, he immediately thought the whole piece was intended for him and was only written on his account. He expressed himself as follows: —

It was a drama of the famous Norwegian spy, the inventor of the equality madness. How the book fell into my hands I could not say. But now everything was clear and gave occasion to the worst suspicions concerning the reputation of my wife. The plot of the drama was as follows: A photographer (a nickname I had earned by my novels drawn from real life) has married a person of doubtful repute, who had been formerly the mistress of a great proprietor. The woman supports the husband from a secret fund which she derives from her former partner. In addition, she carries on the

business of her husband, a good-for-nothing, who spends his time drinking in the society of persons of no consequence. Now that is a misrepresentation of the facts committed by the reporters. They were informed that Maria [Strindberg's wife] made translations, but they did not know that it was I who particularly corrected them and paid over to her the sums received for them. Matters become bad when the poor photographer discovers that the adored daughter is not his child, and that the wife warned him when she induced him to marry her. To complete his disgrace, the husband consents to accept a large sum as indemnity. By this I understand Maria's loan upon the baron's security, which I endorsed after my wedding. . . . I prepared a great scene for the afternoon. I wished to catch Maria in cross-examination, to which I wished to give the form of a defence for us both. We had been equally attracted by the scarecrow of the masculinists, who had been paid for the pretty job.

To show how mad were his conclusions it is only necessary to add that he does not resemble in the least the selfish idealist, Hjalmar Ekdal, in The Wild Duck, who never works unless he has to, while Strindberg's literary labours have been enormous. Nor is it conceivable that the baroness, Madame Strindberg, furnished Ibsen with the documents for the portrait of the delightful Gina Ekdal. That woman was drawn from the people. Furthermore, to call Ibsen "the inventor of the equality madness" is absolutely a misstatement of a fact, as Ibsen has been a despiser of democracy and all forms of equality.

With an almost infinite capacity for suffering, let us hope that this great, bruised soul has found surcease from its mental suffering, found some gleams of consolation, in his calmer years — until his next psychical hegira. In rebelling against his existence, in refusing to accept the wisdom of the experienced, Strindberg has suffered intensely because his is an intense temperament. But he is a "culture hero," he has "proved all things," and even from his hell he has brought us the history of experiences not to be forgotten. One is tempted to credit the alleged utterance of Ibsen, "Here is one who will be greater than I!"

III

HENRY BECQUE

Emile Zola once wrote in his sweeping dictatorial manner, "Le théâtre sera naturaliste ou il ne sera pas"; but as Henry Becque said in his mordant style, Zola always convinced one in his pronunciamentos; it was only when he attempted to put his theories into action that they completely broke down. Alas! realism in the theatre after all the gong-sounding of café æstheticians, after the desperate campaigns of the one clairvoyant manager in the movement, Antoine, is as dead as the romanticism of Hernani. After the flamboyant, the drab — and now they are both relegated to the limbo of the tried-and-found-wanting.

When Zola sat down to pen his famous call to arms, Naturalism on the Stage, Antoine was still in the future, Dumas *fils* and Sardou ruled the Parisian theatre, Uncle Sarcey manufactured his diverting *feuilletons*, and Augier was become a classic. The author of L'Assommoir had like Alexander sighed for new worlds to subjugate. He had won a victory, thanks to Flaubert and the De Goncourts, in fiction; it remained for the theatre to provoke his ire.

It still clung obstinately to old-fashioned conventions and refused to be coerced either by Henrietta Maréchal or by the furious onslaught of Zola and his cohort of writing men.

In the essay referred to, Zola said that a piece of work will always be a corner of nature seen through a temperament. He told the truth when he declared that the "romantic movement was but a skirmish; romanticism, which corresponds to nothing durable, was simply a restless regret of the old world." Stendhal and Balzac had created the modern novel. The stage did not move with the other arts, though Diderot and Mercier "laid down squarely the basis of the naturalistic theatre." Victor Hugo gave the romantic drama its death-blow. Scribe was an ingenious cabinet-maker. Sardou "has no life — only movement." Dumas the younger was spoiled by cleverness — "a man of genius is not clever, and a man of genius is necessary to establish the naturalistic formula in a masterly fashion." Besides, Dumas preaches, always preaches. "Emile Augier is the real master of the French stage, the most sincere"; but he did not know how to disengage himself from conventions, from stereotyped ideas, from made-up ideas.

Who, then, was to be the saviour, according to Zola? And this writer did not underrate the difficulties of the task. He knew that "the dramatic author was enclosed in a rigid frame, . . . that the solitary reader tolerates

everything, goes where he is led, even when he is disgusted; while the spectators taken *en masse* are seized with prudishness, with frights, with sensibilities of which the author must take notice under pain of a certain fall. But everything marches forward! If the theatre will submit to Sardou's juggling, to the theories and witticisms of Dumas, to the sentimental characters of Augier, the theatre will be left in the onward movement of civilization"; and as Becque said in his Souvenirs of a Dramatic Author, the theatre has reached its end many times, yet somehow it continues to flourish despite the gloomy prophecies of the professors and critical malcontents. Every season, avowed Becque, that same cry rises to heaven, — "La fin du théâtre"; and the next season the curtain rises in the same old houses, on the same old plays.

However, Zola trumpeted forth his opinions. According to him the De Goncourt brothers were the first to put into motion realistic ideas. Henriette Maréchal, with its dialogue copied from the spoken conversation of contemporary life, with its various scenes copied boldly from reality, was a path breaker. And Becque again interrupts; Edmond de Goncourt posed for thirty years as a hissed author, "pour cette panade d'Henriette Maréchal." Away with the mechanism of the polished, dovetailed, machine-made play of Dumas. "I yearn for life with its shiver, its breath, and its strength; I long for life as it is," passionately declaimed

the simple-minded bourgeois Zola, who then, in default of other naturalistic dramatists, turned his Thérèse Raquin into a play — and melodrama it was, not without its moments of power, but romantic and old-fashioned to a degree.

And this was Zola's fate: he contumaciously usurped the throne of realism, never realizing his life long that he was a romanticist of the deepest dye, a follower of Hugo, that melodramatic taleteller. All the while he fancied himself a lineal descendant of Balzac and Flaubert. Searching ceaselessly with his Diogenese lantern for a dramatist, he nevertheless overlooked not only a great one, but the true father of the latter-day movement in French dramatic literature — Henry Becque. What a paradox! Here was the unfortunate Becque walking the boulevards night and day with plays under his arm, plays up his sleeve, plays in his hat, plays at home — and always was he shown the door, only to reappear at the managerial window. Calm in his superiority, his temper untouched by his trials, Becque presented the picture of the true Parisian man of genius, — witty, ironical on the subject of his misfortunes, and absolutely undaunted by refusals. He persisted until he forced his way into the Comédie Française, despite the intriguing, the disappointments, the broken promises, and the open hostility of Sarcey, then the reigning pontiff of French dramatic criticism. Jules Clarétie pretended a

sympathy that he did not feel, and it was only when pressure was brought by Edouard Thierry that his masterpiece, Les Corbeaux, was put on the stage after many disheartening delays; after it had been refused at the Vaudeville, the Gymnase, the Odéon, the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Gaîté, the Cluny, and the Ambigu. Such perseverance is positively heroic.

I know of few more diverting books than Becque's Memoirs and the record of his Literary Quarrels. If he was gay, careless, and unspoiled by his failures in his daily existence, he must have saved his bile for his books. They are vitriolic. The lashing he gives Sarcey and Clarétie is deadly. He had evidently put his revengeful feelings carefully away and only revived them when the time came, when his successes, his disciples, his election as the master of a powerful school, warranted his decanting the bitter vintage. How it sparkles, how it bites! He pours upon the head of Sarcey his choicest irony. After snubbing the young Becque, after pompously telling him that he had no talent, that he should take Scribe for a model, Sarcey at the end, when he saw Becque as a possible strong figure in the dramatic world, calmly wrote: "Oh! Becque I have known a long time. He brought me his first piece. He owes it to me that his The Prodigal Son was played." To cap his attack, Becque prints this statement at the end of the miserable history of his efforts to secure a footing. It is almost too

good to be true. Diabolically clever also is his imitation of a Sarcey *critique* on Molière, for Sarcey was no friend of character dramas.

In his preface to The Ravens, Becque announces that he is not a thinker, not a dreamer, not a psychologist, not a believer in heredity. As Jean Jullien truly said, the Becque plays prove nothing, are not photographic, are not deformations of life, but sincere life itself. The author relates that in composing — he had a large apartment on the rue de Matignon — he spent much time in front of a mirror searching for the exact gesture, for the exact glance of the eye, for the precise intonation. This fidelity to nature recalls a similar procedure of Flaubert, who chanted at the top of his formidable voice his phrases to hear if they would stand the test of breathing. Becque caught the just colour of every speech, and it is this preoccupation with essentials of his art that enabled him to set on their feet most solidly all his characters. They live, they have the breath of life in them; when they walk or talk, we believe in them. The peep he permits us to take into his workshop is of much value to the student.

He admired Antoine, naturally, and his opinion of Zola I have recorded. He rapped Brunetière sharply over the knuckles for assuming that criticism conserves the tradition of literature. Vain words, cries Becque; literature makes itself despite criticism, it is ever in advance of the critics. Only a sterile art is the

result of academies. Curiously enough, Becque had a consuming admiration for Sardou. Him he proclaimed the real master, the man of imagination, observation, the masterly manipulator of the character of characters. This is rather disconcerting to those who admire in the Becque plays just those qualities in which Sardou is deficient. Perhaps the fact that Sardou absolutely forced the production of Becque's L'Enfant Prodigue may have accentuated his praise of that prestidigitator of Marly. Becque entertained a qualified opinion of Ibsen and an overwhelming feeling for Tolstoy as dramatist. The Russian's Powers of Darkness greatly affected the Frenchman. (Becque was born in 1837, died in 1900.)

And what is this naturalistic formula of Becque's that escaped the notice of the zealous Zola and set the pace for nearly all the younger men? Is it not the absence of a formula of the tricks of construction religiously handed down by the Scribe-Sardou school? As is generally the case, the disciples have gone their master one better in their disdain of solid workmanship. The taint of the artificial, of the sawdust, is missing in Becque's masterpieces; yet with all their large rhythms, unconventional act-ends, and freedom from the *cliché*, there is no raggedness in detail; indeed, close study reveals the presence of a delicate, intricate mechanism, so shielded by the art of the dramatist as to illude us into believing that we are in the presence of

unreasoned reality. Setting aside his pessimism, his harsh handling of character, his seeming want of sympathy, — a true objectivity, for he never takes sides with his characters, — Becque is as much a man of the theatre as Sardou. He saw the mad futility of the literary men who invaded the theatre full of arrogant belief in their formulas, in their newer conventions that would have supplanted older ones. A practical playwright, our author had no patience with those who attempted to dispense with the frame of the footlights, who would turn the playhouse into a literary farm through which would gambol all sorts of incompetents masquerading as original dramatic thinkers.

Becque's major quality is his gift of lifelike characterization. Character with him is of prime importance. He did not tear down the structure of the drama but merely removed much of the scaffolding which time had allowed to disfigure its façade. While Zola and the rest were devising methods for doing away with the formal drama, Becque sat reading Molière. Molière is his real master — Molière and life, as Augustin Filon truthfully says. In his endeavour to put before us his people in a simple, direct way he did smash several conventions. He usually lands his audience in the middle of the action, omitting the old-fashioned exposition act, careful preparation, and sometimes development, as we know it in the well-regulated drama. But search for his reasons and they are not long concealed.

Logical he is, though it is not the cruel logic of Paul Hervieu, his most distinguished artistic descendant. The logic of Becque's events must retire before the logic of his characters, that is all. Humanity, then, is his chief concern. He cares little for literary style. He is not a stylist, though he has style — the stark, individual style of Henry Becque.

Complications, catastrophe, dénouement, all these are attenuated in the Becque plays. Atmosphere supplies the exposition, character painting, action. The impersonality of the dramatist is profound. If he had projected himself or his views upon the scene, then we would have been back with Dumas and his preachments. Are we returning to the Molière comedy of character? Movement in the accepted sense there is but little. Treatment and interpretation have been whittled away to a mere profile, so that in the Antoine repertory the anecdote bluntly expressed and dumped on the boards a slice of real life without comment — without skill, one is tempted to add.

Becque was nearer classic form than Hervieu, Donnay, De Curel, Georges Ancey, Leon Hennique, Emile Fabre, Maurice Donnay, Lemaître, Henri Lavedan, and the rest of the younger group that delighted in honouring him with the title of supreme master. After all, Becque's was a modified naturalism. He recognized the limitations of his material, and subdued his hand to them. M. Filon has pointed out that Becque

and his followers tried to bring their work "into line with the philosophy of Taine," as Dumas and Augier's ideas corresponded with those of Victor Cousin, the eclectic philosopher. Positivism, rather than naked realism, is Becque's note. The cold-blooded pessimism that pervades so unpleasantly many of his comedies was the resultant of a temperament sorely tried by experience, and one steeped in the materialism of the Second Empire.

So we get from him the psychology of the crowd, instead of the hero ego of earlier dramatists. He contrives a dense atmosphere, into which he plunges his puppets, and often his people appear cold, heartless, cynical. He is a surgeon, more like Ibsen than he would ever acknowledge, in his calm exposure of social maladies. And what a storehouse have been his studies of character for the generation succeeding him! Becque forged the formula, the others but developed it.

The Becque plays! The last edition is in three volumes published by *La Plume* of Paris. It begins with an opera — fancy an opera by this antagonist of romance! — entitled Sardanapale, in three acts, "imitated" from Lord Byron. Victorin Joncierès, a composer of respectable ability, furnished the music. The "machine" was represented for the first time at the Théâtre Lyrique, February 8, 1867. It need not detain us. L'Enfant Prodigue, a four-act vaudeville, saw the light, November 6, 1868,

at the Théâtre Vaudeville. It is Becque at his wittiest, merriest best. In an unpremeditated manner it displays a mastery of intrigue that is amazing. For a man who despised mere technical display, this piece is a shining exemplar of virtuosity. Let those who would throw stones at Becque's nihilism in the matter of conventional craftsmanship read The Prodigal Son and marvel at its swiftness of action, its stripping the vessel of all unnecessary canvas, and scudding along under bare poles! The comedy is unfailing, the characterization rich in those cunning touches which are like salt applied to a smarting wound. The plot is slight, the adventures of several provincials who visit Paris and there become entangled in the toils of a shrewd adventuress. The underplot is woven skilfully into the main texture. Hypocrisy is scourged. A father and a son discover that they are trapped by the same woman. There is *genre* painting that is Dutch in its admirable minuteness and truth; a specimen is the scene at the *concierge's* dinner. Wicked in the quality called *l'esprit gaulois*, this farce is inimitable — and also a trifle old-fashioned.

In Michel Pauper, — given at the Porte-Saint-Martin, June, 1870, — Becque was feeling his way to simpler methods. The drama is in five acts and seven tableaux; and while it contains in solution all of Becque, it may be confessed that the outcome is rather an indigestible mess. The brutality of the opening scenes is undeni-

able. Michel is a clumsy fellow, who does not always retain our sympathy or respect. His courtship has all the delicacy of a peasant at pasture. But he is alive, his is a salient character. The suicide of De La Roseraye has been faithfully copied by Donnay in La Douloureuse, and by many others in Paris, London, and America. Hélène, poor girl, who is so rudely treated by Comte de Rivailler, would call forth a smile on the countenance of any one when she announces her misfortune in this stilted phraseology, "He asked of his own will what he could not obtain from mine." The ending has a suspicion of the "arranged," even of the violent melodramatic. And how shocking is the fall of Hélène! She is the first of the Becque cerebral female monsters, though she has at least more blood than some of his later creations. She loves the Count — the shadow of an excuse for her destruction of her noble-minded husband. However, one does not read Michel Pauper for amusement.

It is in L'Enlèvement that we find Becque managing with consummate address a genuine problem. It was produced at the Vaudeville, November 18, 1871. The three acts pass at a château in the provinces. Emma de Sainte-Croix, rather than endure the neglect and infidelities of her husband, lives in dignified retirement with her mother-in-law. She is a *femme savante*, though not of the odious bluestocking variety. She has a daily visitor in the

person of a cultivated man who resides in the neighbourhood. At once we are submerged in a situation. De La Rouvre loves Emma. He, too, has been wretchedly mismated. His wife was a despicable voluptuary who cheated him with his domestics. He begs Emma to secure a divorce from her pleasure-loving husband. She refuses. She loathes the divorce courts. She loathes vulgar publicity. He proposes an elopement and is sharply brought to his senses by the woman. She loves the proprieties too much to indulge in romantic adventures, and has she not suffered enough through this love illusion? Her mother-in-law does not approve of the man's presence. Her son is always her son, and she hopes for reconciliation. If only Emma would be a little more lenient!

The prodigal husband returns. He is an admirable blackguard who respects neither his own honour nor that of his family. He flirts with his wife at his mother's instigation, but his heart is not in the game. Descends upon him one of his lady loves. She invades the château and is introduced to his wife as a supposedly casual passer-by. But she is detected as the worthless spouse of De La Rouvre. There is a scene. Later Raoul, the husband, forces his way into his wife's bedchamber and the episode on reading recalls Paul Hervieu's Le Dédale. The outcome, however, is different. Repulsed, the husband curses his wife, and she departs for India, elopes with her lover. Terse in dialogue,

compact in construction, L'Enlèvement contains some of the best of Becque. Ibsen and Dumas are writ large in the general plan and dénouement, though the character drawing is wholly Becque's. Despite his economy of action and speech, he seldom gives one the feeling of abruptness in transitional passages. His scenes melt one into the other without a jar, and only after you have read or watched one of his plays do you realize the labour involved to produce such an illusion of life while disguising the controlling mechanism. All the familiar *points de repères*, the little tricks so dear to the average playmaker, are absent. Becque conceals his technical processes, and in that sense he has great art, though often seeming quite artless. And L'Enlèvement is more than a picture of manners; it is as definitely a problem play as A Doll's House. Only after being driven to it does Emma revolt. She is a *revoltée* of the cerebral type. The crowning insult is the attempt made upon her right to her person. Hervieu's heroine is passional, and it accounts for her lapse. We feel for her acutely. Emma's departure is logical.

With La Parisienne, Becque is once more on his own ground. Paris and its cynical view of the relations of the sexes is embodied in this diabolically adroit and disconcerting comedy — represented for the first time at the Comédie-Française, September 14, 1882, and reviewed at the Odéon, November 3, 1897. The play is full

of a *blague* now slightly outmoded, but the types remain eternally true — those of the Parisian triangle. Only this three-cornered, even four-cornered, arrangement (for there are two "dear friends") is played with amazing variations.

Clotilde du Mesnil and Lafont are quarrelling over a letter when the curtain rises. He adjures her to resist temptation. "Resist, Clotilde; that is the only honourable course, and the only course worthy of you." She must remain dignified, honourable, the pride of her husband. Suddenly, in the midst of this ignoble squabble, she cries, "Prenez garde, voilà, mon mari!" Up to this moment the audience fancies that it has been witnessing a marital row. The shock is tremendous when the truth is learned. Nor are your feelings spared when later you hear Clotilde accuse Lafont of not being fond of *her* husband. The two wrangle over the accusation. In another speech she exclaims: "Vous êtes un libre penseur! Je crois que vous vous entendriez tres bien avec une maitresse qui n'aurait pas de religion, quelle horreur!" This extremely naïve statement reveals to us the land on the other side of good and evil in which dwell Becque's characters. Are they even cynical? Hardly, for there is no mockery, no parade of immorality, no speeches with equivocal meanings. The calm assumption of external decency is merely a reversion to the baldest paganism. It is the modern over-cynicism. These people are so bad that, paradoxical as it may sound, they are good.

Certainly they are more refreshing and infinitely more moral than that wretched Camille, with her repentant whimperings and her nauseating speeches about soiled doves and their redemption.

And Lafont, stupid, loving, honest according to his lights, Lafont so marvellously presented by Antoine, is he not a being who lives! Clotilde as incarnated by Réjane is the worldling, neither stupid nor witty. She is simply a good-natured, vain woman, who deceives her husband and lover as naturally as she breathes.

Clotilde takes on a new *amant*, who treats her as badly as she treated Lafont. Deserted, she picks up the old thread and begins to live as before. As Mrs. Craigie says of this play: "There are critics who mistaking the situation for the philosophy have called this piece immoral. One would as soon call Georges Dandin or Tom Jones immoral. A true book, a true play, cannot be otherwise than moral. It is the false picture — no matter how pretty — which makes for immorality."

Throughout, these lovers quarrel like married folk. The social balance is upset, domestic virtues topsy-turvied. And yet the merciless stripping of the conventional romance, — the deluded husband, unhappy wife, and charming consoler of the afflicted, — these old properties of Gallic comedy are cast into the dust-bin. It is safe to say that since La Parisienne no French dramatic author has had the courage

to revive the sentimental triangle as it was before this comedy was written. If he ventured to, he would be laughed off the stage. And for suppressing the sentimental married harlot let us be thankful to the memory of Becque.

Les Corbeaux is unique in modern comedy. Never played, to my knowledge, in English, its ideas, its characterization, its ground-plan, have been often ruthlessly appropriated. The verb "to steal" is never conjugated in theatreland. Yet this play's simplicity is appealing. A loving father of a family, a good-tempered bourgeois, dies suddenly. His affairs turn out badly. His widow and three daughters fall into the hands of the ravens, the partner of their father, his lawyer, his architect, and a motley crew of tradespeople. Ungrateful matter this for dramatic purposes. Scene by scene Becque exposes the outer and inner life of these defenceless women and their secret and malign persecutors. Every character is an elaborate portrait. Naturally, the family go to the dogs, and the wickedest villain of the lot catches in marriage the flower of the unhappy flock. His final speech is sublime, "My child, since your father's death you were hemmed in by a lot of designing scoundrels." And by inference he pats himself on the back, he, the worst scoundrel of all. If you tell me that the theme is not a pleasant or suitable one for the drama, I shall recommend you to the spirit of the late Henry Becque for

answer. Les Corbeaux is the bible of the dramatic realists.

Remain seven small pieces, principally in one act. La Navette is wicked — and amusing. It aims at nothing else. Les Honnêtes Femmes might have been written by Dumas. It is a sugar-coated sermon extemporized by a young married woman for the benefit of a presumptive lover. She finds him a bride, and the curtain falls. Le Départ is of sterner metal. Here Becque beats Zola at his own game. The scene represents a working girl's atelier in a Parisian store. The various women are clearly outlined, so clearly that Huysmans in Sœurs Vatard is recalled. One girl is honest. She is honourable enough to refuse an offer of marriage made by the foolish young son of the proprietor, and for this wisdom receives insults from the father and is finally discharged for being too virtuous. She then incontinently goes to the devil. The devastating irony of the dramatist illuminates this little piece with sinister effect. And the moral is never far to seek in Becque — perhaps a twisted moral, yet not altogether a negligible one. In Veuve we find our old friend Clotilde of La Parisienne, now a widow. Her behaviour to her faithful admirer is a study of feminine malice, not only seen "through a temperament," but the outcome of unerring observation. Madeleine is a depressing sketch of a woman with a past who is educating her child at a convent. It has poignant moments. The other two little

affairs, Le Domino à Quart and Une Exécution, are exercises in pure humour of the volatile Parisian sort.

Becque's touch is light in comedy, rather clumsy in set drama. He is, as a rule, without charm, and he never indulges in mock pathos or cheap poetic flights. He excelled in depicting manners, and his dramatic method, as I have endeavoured to show, was direct and free from antique rhetoric and romantic turgidities. He has been superseded by a more comprehensive synthesis; France is become weary of the cynical sinners — yet that does not invalidate the high ranking of this man of genius. Whatever may be his deficiencies in the purely spiritual, Henry Becque will ever remain a commanding figure in the battalion of brilliant French dramatists.

IV

GERHART HAUPTMANN

Der Mensch, das ist ein Ding
Das sich von ungefähr bei uns verfing:
Von dieser Welt und doch auch nicht von ihr:
Zur Hälfte — wo? wer weiss? — zur Hälfte hier.
Halb unser Bruder und aus uns Geboren
Uns feind und freund zur Hälfte und verloren.
— *Die Versunkene Glocke.*

In the figure of Gerhart Hauptmann we encounter a man of genius, a man of European significance, and more than the standard-bearer of Young Germany. True, Hauptmann did graduate from the seminary of the realists, — the heads of which were Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, — writing, under the name of Bjarne P. Holmsen, that delectable, ironic fantasy, Papa Hamlet. But the dramatic poetic instincts of the Silesian youth — he was born at Salzbrunn, 1862, the son of a hotel-keeper — were not long to be penned behind the bars of a formula. As in Goethe's Faust, two spirits travailed furiously within him. Ultra-idealist in his boyhood, he suffered from the green-sickness of Byronism, and wrote poems in imitation of Byron, Hebbel, Schiller. He studied sculpture at Rome for a time and set up an

atelier there. His epic, Promethidenlos (1885), was as subjective as a restless, unhappy young man of twenty-three could make it. Yet there is no mistaking the chord set clanging by its immature music — the chord of sympathy with human suffering, the true Hauptmann leit motiv that may be equally heard in his first drama, Before Sunrise, and in his latest, Rose Bernd.

The critical allotment of Hauptmann to the Ibsen domain is easy, too easy; he has been greatly influenced by the "red star of the north," though it has not been a baleful one. He owes as much to Zola as to Ibsen, as Zola owes in his turn much to Victor Hugo and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Young Germany itself, Karl Bleibtreu, Conrad Alberti, Sudermann, Halbe, Conradi, Kretzer, and the rest were in the fashioning of the *Freie Bühne* heavily indebted to Antoine and his revolutionary Théâtre Libre. Under the spell of the mystic and lyric prose of Friedrich Nietzsche — surely among the most musical that issued from German lips — individualism became an all-absorbing element in the production of art works. It was the old leaven of Max Stirner and his Der Einzige. John Henry Mackay, the Scotch-German, hymned in almost delirious verse the rights of the Ego; even the cool-headed East Prussian Sudermann felt the impact of this lyric anarchism when he published his Three Heron Feathers. As to Hauptmann, whose lyre was ever more sensitive to the mobility of the moral atmosphere,

this wind of individualism swept him along and he wrote Before Sunrise. It was produced in 1889, and at once its author was recognized as a force.

Socialistic, this play is almost as rank as La Terre. Technically it has many weak spots, but the basic idea is capital. The Krauses, suddenly come into money, afforded the dramatist opportunities for his still immature but profoundly true gifts of characterization. It is a depressing crowd he sets before us, drunkenness being the least of its defects. Helene Krause is betrothed to the lover of her stepmother, and when Alfred Loth, a high-minded socialist, appears, she naturally falls in love with him. Loth, warned by a doctor — an excellently conceived character — that it were insane to marry into a tainted family, leaves a letter for Helene and vanishes. She promptly kills herself. The final curtain is harrowing. There is exaggerated realism and also that curious tendency, which has developed instead of abating, of dealing with depraved types. Friedensfest (1890), which followed, begins to show Hauptmann more conscious of his own talents. The Scholz family is accurately studied and presented. The dénouement baldly stated — an unhappy father come home to die in a household from which he has been banished by his conduct — smacks of German sentimentality. Here the poet demonstrated that all lies in the individual handling of the theme.

The moral is "Peace on earth, good will to men," and this unhappy pessimistic family is made to realize the strength of the collectivist ideal. The same year Einsame Menschen appeared, in which Ibsen's influence is paramount. It reads like a variant of Rosmersholm, diluted though it be. If it proves anything, it is that the unpurified is to be distrusted because it brings unhappiness in its train. The Vockerat family is a fairly contented group until the appearance of Anna Mahr, a young woman from Zurich University who has absorbed the unsettling culture of the day. She speedily unseats the judgment of John Volkerat, and in becoming his affinity she makes him neglect his lovely wife. It is all so Ibsenian that we note with a sense of the incongruous the scene of the action, the Müggelsee near Berlin. John hates the religion of his parents, becomes estranged from these kindly folk, throws himself on the mercy of Anna, who, after lecturing him in the true-blue cerebral style of the emancipated woman, goes away. Distracted, the young man drowns himself.

Notwithstanding technical and psychologic advances, this effort is not so convincing as Before Sunrise. One feels the thesis prepared, the task attacked, and not the spontaneous work of art. Charles Henry Meltzer, Hauptmann's friend and English translator, declares that Before Sunrise was written while the poet was still filled with admiration of Tolstoy's Dominion

of Darkness, and after many conversations with Arno Holz and Bruno Wille, the socialist. In one respect it is very remarkable — the evocation of atmosphere. And some critics see in Anna Mahr a forerunner to Hilda Wangel of The Master Builder.

When, however, Die Weber was printed (1892), all Germany knew that the master had appeared. It was not until February, 1893, that the first performances took place on the *Freie Bühne*, Deutsches Theatre, Berlin. The drama stands at the parting of the ways. Not since Wagner's Die Meistersinger had such an attempt been made to clear the German stage of its gingerbread rhetoric, its pasteboard mock-antiques, its moonshine romantics. And while the Wagner comedy was all grace, sweetness, and light and only epical in its vast machinery of narration, The Weavers was a quivering transcript from life — and such life! Germany took fire from the blaze of the dramatist's generous wrath. Socialism or anarchy, what you will, were swallowed up in the presentment of this veracious document of wretched lives. Yet, while its *tendenz* is unmistakably an arraignment of the wealthy classes, of the *bourgeois* master weavers, as is Zola's stern denunciation in Germinal of unfeeling mine owners, Hauptmann, being the finer artist, does not drive his lesson home with a moral sledge-hammer. He paints the picture; his audience finds the indictment. Here is a new German art at last.

And not altogether unprepared for this violent drama should have been his admirers. His short *nouvelle*, Bahnwärter Thiel, is full of pity for the downtrodden. This story sounds like a transposition of a Zola melodrama to a finer key. The companion tale in the same volume, The Apostle, might have been written by Dostoïevsky.

In Die Weber, — or De Waber, as it is called in the patois of Silesia, — Hauptmann is for the first time Hauptmann. Zola and Ibsen are no longer felt, for the resemblance to An Enemy of the People is of the vaguest. Henceforth it is the masses, not the individual. Raised in the weaving districts of Silesia, his grandfather a weaver and a witness of a similar strike with its dire consequences, — Robert Hauptmann, his father, also sat at the loom — the subject was one that could be treated with epic breadth and eloquence by the poet. The mob is the hero, for old Hilfe is only a representative of his class. Baumert the soldier, Ansorge, the women, the blind wife, and the climax where old Hilfe is dead and the little Mielchen tells with babyish joy the story of the shooting — every character, every incident, rings true, and rang so widely and so well that it set pealing the bells of the world. If Hauptmann had died after writing Die Weber, he would have been acclaimed a great dramatist.

It was Matthew Arnold who Englished Joubert's soul's cry, "You hurt me!" In this moving and gloomy and largely planned tragedy

of the lowly, Hauptmann holds no brief for anarchy, plays upon no class sentiment. He seems as objective as Flaubert, yet no play that I ever witnessed is such a judgment of man and his cruelty to his fellow-beings.

The ancients, who sounded the abysmal depths of despair, crime, and terror, nevertheless contrived some relief; if no other, the artistic form itself palliated the awful content of a tragedy of Æschylus. But Hauptmann, with absolute indifference to our moral epidermis, strips bare for us human nature, and we revolt naturally enough. The truth, naked and unadorned, is always unpleasant. Pascal once wrote: "When I see the blindness and the misery of man; when I survey the whole dumb universe and man without light, left to himself and lost, as it were, in this corner of the universe, not knowing who placed him here, what he has come to do, what will become of him when he dies, and incapable of any knowledge whatever, I fall into terror, like that of a man who, having been carried in his sleep to an island, desert and terrible, should awake ignorant of his whereabouts and with no means of escape, and therefore I wonder how those in so miserable a state do not fall into despair." What would he not have written after witnessing this play?

The Weavers is a parable. The Weavers is a symphony in five movements, with one grim, leading motive — hunger. In every act you hear that ominous, that sickening word "hunger." The

necessity of such a play is chilling to our pampered and capricious appetites. Hunger! What a horrible theme for an art work! The northern novelist, Knut Hamsum, has in a more personal style used the same theme. We love blithe art, art imbued with deep serenity, — *heiterkeit*, Winckelmann called it, — so away with this grim phantom, evoked by a ruthless imagination! But what if it be true? That is the affair of the Commissioner of Charities. We pay our taxes. Go to, Herr Hauptmann, go to! We prefer illusionists, not unmaskers of grim truths. Yet hunger!

"There is," wrote Thomas Hardy, "a size at which dignity begins; farther on there is a size at which grandeur begins; farther on there is a size at which solemnity begins; farther on a size at which ghastliness begins."

The novelist was speaking of the interstellar universe. In Die Weber there are depths where ghastliness begins. It is not a play, it is a chorale of woe, malediction, and want. The people, hardly civilized, are put before us, a marvellous vitascope of pain and disease. What avails criticism before such a spectacle?

It is hardly necessary to recapitulate the grewsome story of this play — how the weavers starved, how the weavers revolted, and that wonderful ending, old age stiffened in death and childhood merrily unconscious. It recalls Victor Hugo's precipice with its single crannied rose in full bloom. And The Weavers

was the first modern play that deals with the life of the proletarians.

College Crampton (1892), Der Biberpelz (1893), Hannele (1893), Florian Geyer (1896), Die Versunkene Glocke (1897), Fuhrmann Henschel (1898), Schluck und Jau (1900), Michael Kramer (1900), Der rote Hahn (1901), Der Arme Heinrich (1902), Rose Bernd (1903), complete the list thus far of this fecund and remarkable man. He has felt his way through naturalistic drama to comedy, and in the latter without much success; and from comedy to historical drama, with no success at all; indeed, Florian Geyer was a failure, though in its amended version as given last October 22, in Berlin, at the Lessing Theatre, it won approval, critical and popular. The poet has written a new five-act comedy for the same theatre, which he calls The Merry Maiden of Bishopsberg.

The Beaver-Coat and The Red Cock — the symbol of fire — are folk-plays, the comedy rather grim, the sense of actuality strong. The first is a "thieves' comedy" and the fooling is heavy enough in both pieces; the latter is a continuation. German officialism is parodied. Schluck und Jau was also a failure. Written partially in prose and verse, it recalls Calderon, Grillparzer, Shakespeare's prologue to The Taming of the Shrew, and Hauptmann himself. Although Fuhrmann Henschel followed Hannele and The Sunken Bell, we prefer to speak of it and several other plays before those two masterpieces.

Wagoner Henschel was a surprise and a deep disappointment to many of Hauptmann's admirers. He seemed to return to the most sordid of topics, yet it contains passages of spiritual beauty; while as a whole the note it sounds is a supernatural one, despite the vileness of its surroundings. The psychologic depiction of Henschel's downfall is masterly. He is a stolid teamster whose first wife in her death-bed makes him promise not to marry the servant girl, Hanna Scholl. But he does, for some one must look after his daughter. The moral *dégringolade* begins. The woman is a vicious slattern. She is unfaithful. Things go badly. Henschel comes to believe that his first wife haunts him, and kills himself. It is very morbid, but it fits in the Hauptmann scheme, as Professor J. F. Coar in his Studies in German Literature shows: "Hannele contrasted spiritual consciousness with moral consciousness. And Henry in The Sunken Bell fails because he attempts what his creator, Hauptmann, attempted in Hannele. How, then, shall a poet find his quest rewarded? Only by seeking the spiritual mirrored in the moral. Hauptmann is far from having such a vision in Teamster Henschel; still he is to be credited with the effort to obtain it. Again, he could only see the misery of life. . . . In constantly narrowing circles the thoughts of Henschel turn about the one tense feeling of wrong committed when he married again in violation of his promise. The infidelity of the second wife appears to him

like the judgment of God. . . . At night the figure of his dead wife lies down with him. . . . There is no trace of dialectical reasoning in this simple Silesian teamster. He stands facing existence without the ability to apply his reason to anything but the humdrum affairs of life. Once forced beyond the bounds of these, reason gives way, and he is gradually led into a pessimistic fatalism from which there is no escape. But to create by transforming spiritual life into moral action is the law of individual existence, and men, as Hauptmann sees them, are in the world for this purpose."

On the material side Fuhrmann Henschel might be called a drama of insomnia. The majority of the Hauptmann plays record the struggle of mankind to widen its spiritual horizon. College Crampton is an exception. It is merely an entertaining piece shorn of tragic meanings. Moreover, it contains some excellent comedy and characterization. The hero — a sorry one — drinks. Michael Kramer ends with the suicide of a foolish talented young fellow, who is jeered to the desperate deed by a lot of idlers in a Silesian café. The types are local. Kramer, his father, is an austere artist. The *milieu* is the artistic, though as drama we are never carried off our feet. Loosely joined episodes and too much dialogue mar the piece. There are, however, many deft touches, and the scene wherein Kramer views his dead son is full of reserve power and suggestiveness. Nearly all these

plays enumerated thus far are irregular on the constructive side, withal effective and human. Hauptmann has ever been careless in his technics. The well-made play is never in his thoughts, for he works from within to external details. Even in his imitative period he betrayed this creative impulse.

Der Arme Heinrich is not Hauptmann at his happiest, despite rare flashes of beauty and power in this replica of a mediæval miracle play. The theme is unpleasant, a leprous knight rescued by the unselfish pure love of a maiden — an idea as old as The Flying Dutchman, though set forth in different terms, framed by another environment. It is rather to Hannele and Die Versunkene Glocke we must turn for the greater Hauptmann.

In Hannele and in his other dramatic productions he has proved himself to possess in a consummate degree the art of arousing certain emotions, of presenting most vividly certain types which have excited his brain into abnormal activity; above all he knows the art of contrasts. He is an idealist, he is a realist, he is a religionist, he is a natural philosopher. After carefully analyzing Hannele, on is tempted to pronounce it the work of a transcendental realist.

The play is the history of a child's soul. It is a psychological study of the brain of a wretched little outcast, who, just before her death, experiences delirious trances, in which condition the

events and personages of her unhappy life become objective visions, and these visions are seen by the audience. The story is so simply, so chastely told that one marvels effects can be produced by a verbal machinery of such simplicity. The disgust inspired by the quarrelling, fetid crew of beggars in the almshouse gives way to feelings of the most profound pity at the entrance of the poor little would-be suicide. Her first words, "I'm afraid," inspire sensations of pity at her condition, and horror of the brute who drove her to the commission of such a desperate deed. Hauptmann's touch is so true, so tender, that he evokes with ease the whole past of this wretched girl, whose existence has been one of blows, curses, kicks, and starvation. Her undeveloped soul, cramped as it had been by her neglected life, has awakened under the kindnesses of her teacher Gottwald, and how natural that he should be invested by her with almost supernatural attributes!

Hauptmann conveys all this and more through the half-scared utterances of Hannele, who refuses to respond to the pertinacious questionings of Magistrate Berger, and only speaks when Gottwald asks her to. She appears to be a stubborn girl, but it is a stubbornness born of hard beatings and harsh language. She has been the butt of the village children, and the one ray of light which has entered her life is her teacher, and through him some glimmerings of religion. Heaven to her is a place all golden glory, whose

Lord is overflowing with pity for unhappy children, and where she can eat, drink, and be warm. She has been half starved and turned out in the streets on biting cold winter nights. It is most natural that she should long earnestly for this heaven, and her appeals to be allowed to die, so that she could see the Lord, are eloquent to a degree. She is only a beggar girl, this Hannele, and Hauptmann gives her to us in all her rags and misery, and free from mawkish sentimentality.

Pity is the dominating note of the play, especially in part first; Hannele's bruised body, shrinking, sensitive soul, arouse the deepest pity. The transition to an atmosphere where the elements of awe and fear enter is quietly accomplished by the dramatist. Hannele's delirium is the medium. When she first appears in the strong arms of her teacher she is numbed by the icy waters of the pond, but the warmth of the hot drink and the hot bricks soon revive her and she wanders a little in her speech. She tells Gottwald that it was the Lord who beckoned to her in the water, and when she is left alone with Sister Martha, she screams with fear at the sight of old Daddy Pleschke's hat and coat, which hang at the foot of her miserable bed. The child thinks she sees her stepfather.

But mark the skill of Hauptmann. After she is left alone her dreams begin to assume a more definite shape, and then we, sitting in the darkened auditorium, see Mattern, the mason, her

brute of a stepfather, as a vile nightmare. He acts and speaks to the little form on the bed as he would in real life, and it writhes in agony, and finally Hannele, her brain on fire with the hideous vision, awakens to his call, and jumps tremblingly out of bed, rushes into a corner for shelter, and there faints.

The return of Sister Martha, the replacing of Hannele on her couch, are followed by the further progress of the fever and delirium. Being alone, a vision of her mother appears. It is the most striking of the play. Her mother consoles her, speaks of heaven in tender and lofty imagery, and hints at her suffering while alive, and just grazes the subject of Hannele's birth. Her suspected father is the examining magistrate Berger, but the idea is lightly dwelt upon — sufficiently, however, to give us a glimmer of the truth and adding a deeper accent to the gloom. Hannele's mother was hounded to her death as was this child. Her body, as we know by the testimony of the wood-cutter, Seidel, was a mass of bruises after death. The interview between mother and daughter is solemn and yet piteously human. The poor child cries aloud after the fading figure and later shows with joy to Sister Martha the supposed flower, Golden Sesame, which her mother gave her. Then this tiny waif of the gutter becomes light-headed and sings of flowers, of her teacher, and of the angels she has seen. From this delirious state she never recovers, and her dreams take

on a darker tinge in the second part of the play.

A great dark angel appears and remains dumb to the child's excited questionings. Her visions become involved here, for the Deaconess is also seen, and while she is habited as Sister Martha, her features are those of Hannele's mother. The child notices this and remarks upon it. And now a touch of Hoffmannish fantasy is given in the appearance of the village tailor, who salutes her as the Princess Hannele, and delights her by producing a shining robe and a pair of small slippers. Although she knows she is preparing for her death-bed, she is delighted. Her conversation with the Deaconess has taught her that death is not to be avoided — that it is the gate to joys eternal. There is something subtly sad in this child eagerly asking about death and the hereafter, with the awful symbol of death sitting in grim silence before her. Hauptmann has deeply probed the childish heart. The fantastic tailor retires after deferentially saluting Death, and then some children, headed by Gottwald, enter and beg Hannele's pardon for calling her Princess Ragtag. Gottwald is bidding her farewell when a lot of the village people appear, and later the crystal coffin into which Hannele is laid. There is nothing repulsive in all this, despite its realism. Hauptmann's art is so far removed from the crude that sequence follows sequence in the most natural fashion and just as in De Quincey's Dream Fugue.

Then comes the most dramatic part of these visions. Mattern slouches in and begins to curse Hannele, and to search for her in the dark corners. The neighbours cluster about the coffin, hiding it from view. The stranger enters and calls Mattern to account. There is a scene between the two. Mattern denies having treated the child badly, and thunder and lightning rebuke him for the lie. He perjures himself, and the mystic flower glows with miraculous light on Hannele's breast. The neighbours, who play the part of Greek chorus, fiercely cry, "Murderer! murderer!" and as one pursued by the Furies the miserable wretch rushes away to hang himself. The stranger assumes a supernatural appearance. He becomes clothed in white, and his brow shines. He advances to the crystal basket wherein lies Hannele, and bids her arise. She does so, and the neighbours flee affrighted. Remember that all this occurs within the darkened chambers of Hannele's sick brain. Its objectivity, so far as we are concerned, is a device of the dramatist. Hannele arises and goes to the stranger, who is a glorified image of her teacher, Gottwald. Some lyrical passages, strongly tinged with Oriental colouring, follow, and an apotheosis closes the scene.

After all this burst of colour and harmony, for there is much music of harps and plucked strings, we are almost instantly transported to the almshouse again, and see Hannele once

more in her rags on her squalid bed. The doctor gravely announces, "She is dead," and Sister Martha ends the play by saying, "She is in heaven."

Now make of Hannele what you will. Consider it as a plea against cruelty to children, as a strong pictorial proverb, anything. There is symbolism lurking in its situations. The Christ-idea of pity, an idea new to the pagan world, but not new to Buddhism, may be considered as the key-note of Hannele. Religious it is not. Blasphemous, however, in intention it is not, and one fails to see any similarity between it and Jean Beraud's picture of a Christ attired in nineteenth-century garb and with a modern Magdalen washing his feet.

Hauptmann may tread on remarkably delicate ground at times; but his seriousness and artistic ingenuity have enabled him to produce a most poetic analysis of a soul and give it dramatic rhythms. To have the courage to give permanent shape to such a fantastic dream requires, besides imagination, marked technical abilities.

To me Hannele seems like a huge chant to the glory of death. Death, "whose truer name is Onward," as sang the poet, is the theme, and Death is shown to be Lord and Master. Like Maeterlinck, Hauptmann tries to give emotion in the mass. You remember in L'Intruse and Les Aveugles, how everything is subordinated to the production of the one thrill — that of fear.

By dissimilar method Hauptmann gets a similar result. He meets death with a grave sweetness. At first terrible as is the figure of the great Dark Angel, with his dread sword all bathed in greenish light, the Deaconess brings balm to the anxious, questioning soul of the child, and she meets death with dignity and submission. With some of the same gentle and elevated philosophy does Hauptmann approach his theme. The beggar child and her sufferings and dreams serve for him as something which he drapes about with wisdom and poetry.

It is a reversion to the old miracle play cunningly blended with modern realism; it is this that makes its form seemingly amorphous, and renders it both a challenge and stumbling-block to the critics. From the old view-point such a play as this is not fit for the boards. It lacks action, and deals with states of emotion rather than with dramatic events. But a soul life can also be dramatic, and Hauptmann, who knows Parsifal well, has retained an admixture of realism so as to set off by violent contrast the exalted idealism of the later scenes.

Jules Lemaître, the French critic, in praising Hannele, spoke of the persistency in us of early religious impressions, no matter how blurred they become by contact with the world. Oddly enough, this mixture of the real and the supernatural forestalled Gorky and his slum plays. Gorky himself could not have conceived and executed anything more poignant

than the story of Hannele — "Petite sœur de la grande Brunnhild endormie aux rochers déserts," as Gabriel Trarieux calls her. A dream poem, a study in mysticism, Hannele evokes memories of Maeterlinck, though it "lacks the unity of his atmosphere," as an English critic has rightly said. But it is moving art, nevertheless.

Hauptmann wears all the earmarks of a genius. He is child of his age to a dangerous degree, and his tremulous, vibrating sensibility mirrored the hysterical agitation, the pessimism, the sad strivings, the individualism, the fret-fire fomentings and unbelief of a dying century. He knows Goethe, and after the last act of The Sunken Bell one feels constrained to cry, "The third part of Faust!" But it is not Faust, neither is it Tannhäuser, though there are analogies; it is realism, it is idealism, it is pantheism, it is Wagnerism. Above all Friedrich Nietzsche towers in the background, and there is poesy, exquisite poesy.

The Sunken Bell is a compound of antagonistic elements. The unities seem askew, yet the result is artistic and illusory. Hauptmann has a clairvoyant quality; he imposes upon his audience his dream of his own fantastic world, and you find yourself five minutes after the rise of the curtain devoutly believing in this queer No-man's land of mischievous water goblins, satyrs, wonderful white nymphs, and sorrowful mortals. It is all a masque — a pro-

found masque of the spirit in labour. Viewed as a symbol, we see in Heinrich the bell-founder, the type of the struggling, the aspiring artist, who, cast down by defeat, is led to more remote and loftier heights by a new ideal, there to live the life of the Uebermensch, the Super-man, of Nietzsche. The fall is inevitable. Dare as dared Faust and Ibsen's Brand to desert the valleys and scale the slopes of Parnassus, and man's fate is assured.

Hauptmann's hero is a bell-founder who, crazed by grief at the loss of his bell in the lake, mounts the peak and lies dying at the door of a witch. It is at a period so charmingly pictured by Heine. The twilight of the gods has begun and the scared peasant caught flashes of faun-like creatures flitting in woodland glade and grove, still saw shining the breasts of the nymph in the brake, and piously crossed himself when toad, snake, and worm crossed his path. Heinrich is found by Rautendelein, an elfish being, an exquisite creation of fire, of flame, something of Ariel, Miranda, Puck, naïve Gretchen, a new Undine, a symbol of the freedom of nature, a creature touched with the vaguer surmise of adolescence, the most poetically conceived since Goethe's, and yet evocative of Hans Christian Andersen. She, like the mermaid of Andersen, loves the unconscious mortal, and despite the jaundiced warnings of an old spirit of the well, she follows the sick man back to his abode. The first act is ably contrived. There is atmos-

phere, and the well-nigh impossible parts of the faun and the frog man — the latter indulges in the familiar *Brek-ke-ke-keks* of Aristophanes — become real for the moment. It is the Hauptmann spell that weighs upon our senses. Andersen-like, too, is the discovery by this child fairy that love means pain. She finds a tear in her eye and thinks it is dew. The mystery of womanhood encompasses her.

In Act II the bellman is upon a bed of delirium. He has been found and brought down from the mountains by his friends, the priest and the villagers. His wife and children try to comfort him, but he is oblivious, for he sees in his excited trance the figure of a beautiful girl. Suddenly the dream becomes real. Rautendelein sits at his side and woos him back to health. Startling is the end of this scene. The nymph stands against the wall, her eyes fairly blazing at Heinrich, while his wife crouches at his feet, happy at his restoration to sanity. She does not see his glance fondly fastened on the nymph of the forest.

He then leaves his home and goes up to the heights, where, unhampered, he may exercise the full play of his artistic faculties. He will make a bell and tune it to the laughter of Rautendelein. It shall make silvery music across the hills and valleys, and summon the stray souls of earth to him. He exalts nature to the priest who follows him to reclaim his soul; this third act is really a glorified burst of Nietzscheism.

Then he has bad dreams; he is haunted by visions of home, and, after all the splendour of imagery, of his defiance of the conventionalities of life, something mars his life with the perfect woman he has elected to follow.

Appear his two children carrying an urn. "What carry ye?" he demands. "Father, we carry an urn." — "What is in the urn?" "Father, something bitter." — "What is the something bitter?" "Father, our mother's tears." — "Where is your mother?" "Where the water-lilies grow."

Then booms down in the valley, where lies the lake, the sound of a bell; an unearthly tone it has, as if struck by no mortal hand; it is touched by the hand of his dead wife who killed herself to escape her misery. Remorse sets in. He is no longer Balder the god of Spring, but a wretched man, and, driving away with revilings the poor Rautendelein, he descends to the valley, but is driven away, and finally dies in front of the witch's hut; but not before Rautendelein finds him. His last words are an ecstatic appeal to the sun — the sun which is the symbol of his striving.

The charm, the witchery, the magical bitter-sweetness of this dramatic poem are formidable at the close. Heinrich dies of poison, self-administered, while through his filmy eyes there presses the vision of the beloved one. It is, indeed, Rautendelein, but her very shadow. Deserted, dreary, neither maid nor mortal nor

nymph, she accepts the love of the hideous, frog-like Nickelman, and goes down to his slimy couch in the well. She emerges only to see her lover dying, and pathetically denies to him that she is Rautendelein. As the curtain falls on his corpse, we catch a glimpse of the girl sadly returning to the well and to her horrible mate in the mud.

Sorma gave a delicious, naïve, and plastic version of the nymph at the Irving Place Theatre in 1897. She possesses an exquisite sensibility. She painted with a light hand the caprice, elfish cunning, and wiles of Rautendelein, and at the close the tragic note was delicately sounded. It was a great, a notable achievement.

Sorma has been called the German Duse. She is really a Silesian by birth, and she is not a Duse. But she has unusual adroitness in the expression of the conventional dramatic symbolism, and an agility in technic and a variety of vocal and facial expression that enable her to assume a wide range of character. A certain briskness and imperious piquancy make her work unlike that of the German stage. She is more Gallic, in reality more Slavic than Gallic. Her person is finely fashioned, her features good, her eyes particularly expressive, and her mask mobile and expressive easily of a mob of elusive emotions. She reaches her climax by a rational crescendo, and never fails to thrill. Altogether a creature of real fire and with an air of distinction. Of the occasional

sentimentality of the German stage she is never guilty.

Mr. Meltzer in the preface of his admirable translation tells us "to view the play from the standpoint of the reformer, and you may interpret it as the tale of a dreamer, who, hampered by inevitable conditions, strives to remodel human society. For my part I incline to regard Heinrich the bell-founder as a symbol of Humanity struggling painfully toward the realization of its dream of the ideal truth and joy and light and justice. Rautendelein in this reading stands for Nature, or rather for the freedom and sincerity of Nature, missing a reunion with which Humanity can never hope to reach the supreme truth, and the supreme bliss of which the Sun is the emblem."

The artist *sans* moral obligations is bound to be a failure, no matter the height or depth of his genius. This has Tennyson sung; and Goethe, in his imperial manner, has set it forth. Symbolic and allegoric The Sunken Bell may signify the conflict of Pagan and Christian, Jew and Greek, Heinrich standing midway between the opposing forces as did Walter Pater's Denys in the mad days at Auxerrois. Miraculously has the poet fixed his wild people of wood and waves. They with their coarse, elemental gestures and foolery might have stepped out of a canvas by Arnold Böcklin. The blank verse is admirable, and while the Faust metre is largely used there are no such lyrics as we find strewn

through Goethe's immortal pages. And yet — yet is not Hauptmann Germany's most distinguished dramatist since that master? The admirers of Robert Hamerling and Von Wildenbruch will not have it so — possibly because of the pessimism and the socialistic views of the new man. Nevertheless, Hauptmann has the ear of all Germany to-day.

In Rose Bernd, Hauptmann returns to his beloved Silesians of The Weavers, of Fuhrmann Henschel, of Before Sunrise. His new five-act piece is a drama of the open fields and rough peasant life. It is atmospheric throughout. Its moral fibre is incontestably strong, though the method of presentation may seem unpleasant. The dialect is difficult for the student, the play itself squalid and painful to a degree. Nor has it the inevitable quality of Die Weber or Wagoner Henschel. Rose recalls, though vaguely, something of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, of Hetty Sorrel, and of Gretchen. She is a worker in the harvest fields, and previous to the action of the play has been deceived by Christoph Flamm, the mayor of the district and a jolly landowner who has a paralyzed wife. He is a vital figure; his exuberance, unrepentance, selfishness, and genuine passion for Rose are all minutely indicated. His wife has been a second mother to Rose, who resides with her father, a poor old peasant, a strict pietist. Frau Flamm has lost her only child and lives on her memories. She is wheeled about her house in an invalid's chair.

She, too, is alive, and her not unkindly probing of the unfortunate girl's secret brings about some stirring scenes.

Rose is engaged to a young man, a bookbinder, who is pious, whose dream was to become a missionary. He is unassuming, ugly, and adores Rose. She might have surmounted her troubles if the disturbing element in the person of Streckmann, the dissipated engineer of the village threshing machine, had not crossed her fate. He has witnessed the interviews of Rose and Flamm, and he scares her by threatening to tell the story to her father and her betrothed. He attempts to capture her for himself, and at last succeeds, as the wretched girl relates in accusing him: "I came to you in terror and anguish. I got on my knees before you. You swore that you would keep my secret. You fell upon me like a bird of prey. I tried to escape . . . you committed a crime."

Streckmann later, in drunken fury, tells the peasants of Rose's sins. Her father believes in her, but insists upon an explanation. The miserable creature confesses in a delirious accent that she has just strangled her new-born babe. Her father has her arrested, and her patient lover August, who has forgiven her, lifts the swooning girl and exclaims, "Hat das mädel gelitten!" (What the girl must have suffered!) The play was forbidden the boards in Austria by the Emperor — it was at once too moral and too truthful.

The interpretation at the Lessing Theatre, Berlin, which I witnessed, October 2, 1904, was one the memory of which I shall long treasure. The distribution of the rôles was almost faultless; the individual execution of a high order. Rose was enacted by that great artist, Else Lehmann, who portrayed the trying soul states and mental agony of the unfortunate peasant girl with supreme skill. All the more difficult is the character because Hauptmann has resolutely avoided showing us what Rose really thinks. She is reacted upon by her friends and enemies, yet seldom speaks, except in monosyllables. The illumination of her nature was a peculiar triumph of Lehmann's simple, sincere art.

Next to her artistically stood Hedwig Pauly as the invalid wife who knows the manner of man to whom she is united and divines through feminine intuition and sympathy the sufferings of Rose. The scene wherein the girl is interrogated was tear-compelling. Nor must the open-air incidents be forgotten. Herr Brahm's company played throughout with that fidelity to life, with that utter absence of "acting," which are the very essence of the histrionic art.

Rose Bernd, one is tempted to add, is Hauptmann's masterpiece, if we did not remember Die Weber. It is deeply human, and in its exposition of character a masterpiece.

It seems Hauptmann's fate to be hopelessly misinterpreted — he, the poet whose love for his

fellow-beings is become a veritable passion. He began his artistic life as a poet-sculptor, and he has been modelling human souls ever since. Perhaps they may be as imperishable as if they had been carved in marble.

V

PAUL HERVIEU

When Ferdinand Brunetière praises a drama, novel, or poem, it may be inferred that the ethical element predominates. It is, therefore, something of a surprise to find him enthusiastic over Paul Hervieu's latest play, Le Dédale, which met with such a friendly reception at the Théâtre Français, December 19, 1903, the night of its production. It is a work of power, of art, while its moral is not flaunted as on a signboard. The implacably harsh and logical treatment of the woman with two husbands doubtless extorted from M. Brunetière the honour of a patient and lengthy review. Himself a Roman Catholic of the reactionary — one is tempted to employ the old-fashioned word "ultramontane" — type, the French critic could not fail to side with the playwright, though he has not hesitated, after the manner of critics, to read into this problem piece some meanings of his own.

With the advent of the Naquet divorce bill in France the countenance of problem plays underwent a radical change. A ministerial stroke of the pen invalidated Dumas *fils* and his unhappy women as a theme for dramatic treat-

ment. We have had plays dealing with the unpleasant subject since then, but these were either frankly frivolous like those of Alfred Capus, or wittily cynical with those of Maurice Donnay. The modern master builder of French drama, Henry Becque, wrote L'Enlèvement, in which he presented the question with his accustomed clearness and probity. Hervieu, in Le Dédale, shows the influence of at least one scene of Becque, though he has handled the incident so individually as to deflect its conclusions completely. Since L'Enlèvement there has been no such literary performance as Le Dédale, which proved a labyrinth indeed for its unhappy characters and a masterpiece in form.

The story is a simple one, direct as antique tragedy, and far from being improbable. Divorce in France is a much more complicated matter than in America. Society, notwithstanding its cynical attitude, is not too favourable to divorced men and women, particularly women. The church refuses to sanction separation if it is to be followed by remarriage. Whether forged in heaven or elsewhere, the fetters of wedlock are never to be loosed unless by death. Now Hervieu does not pretend to a sympathy with either society or the church. He does not attempt to win our suffrages for the woman or for the man. His is too judicial an intellect to show partisanship, and he is too superior an artist to turn his play into a moral tract. He dives deeper than the law or society; he dives straight into

the human heart, and after setting forth his situations his summing up is irrefragable. From the clash of his warring souls comes his tragedy; the divorce is a mere pretext to set his people in action. The law of the species, that compelling and terrible law, is his weapon, a formidable one in his skilled hands. His thesis, baldly stated, is this: A man and a woman once married are married until death, if there be a child. Let the law supervene, let vagrant passion demolish the social structure, this stark, naked fact remains — the flesh of the child unites the parents in the bond of eternity.

In an earlier play, Les Tenailles, the same idea was present, but is a first attempt compared to this newer work. The story in Le Dédale runs thus: Marianne de Pogis has separated from her husband Max, a handsome, careless *viveur*, for very patent reasons; with her own eyes she witnessed his infidelity, further accentuated by the fact that her friend was an accomplice to his infidelity. The outraged woman takes her son and seeks the protection of her parents. These are called the Villard-Duvals, the father of the old school, tolerant of masculine transgressions; the mother a strict Roman Catholic, who abhors divorce. M. Hervieu has never been so happy in his painting of two such widely dissimilar portraits. Marianne is a proud woman with her father's will and temperament, proud and, unfortunately for her peace of mind, passionate. The inevitable man turns up. He

is an admirable character, this Le Breuil — a gentleman, steadfast, honourable above all, patient. He loves Marianne and will not be refused. And she, tired of her claustral existence, tired of her mother's reproaches, at last listens to the pleadings of her suitor. Why not? She argues that her life has been made miserable through no fault of her own. Why not remarry and snatch some happiness from the devourer of all happiness — Time? Her mother refuses to hear of the project. Worse to her would be the remarriage of her daughter than sheer adultery. She has accused Marianne of an unforgiving disposition, and it is only too plain that she still considers her married to her divorced husband. But the father likes his presumptive son-in-law. The man's honesty and fearlessness appeal to him. Marianne, worn out by the continual bickering, marries Guillaume Le Breuil.

In the next act we find them happy. The little son is loved by his stepfather as if he were his own. But a cloud mounts in their sky. The former husband, Max de Pogis, comes with his mother to intercede for a sight of his boy. He is melancholy and depressingly repentant. He married the woman for whom he sold his matrimonial birthright, and is now a widower. In a vividly conceived and expressed scene his mother, a skilful, worldly dame, argues with Marianne that to the father the love of the son belongs. At last, after an exhausting interview

in which the hearts of these three humans are shown as if in a blazing light, Marianne consents to her son visiting the château of his father and his grandmother.

And then begins the mischief. The boy is smitten by a dangerous illness. The third act discovers Marianne almost crazed by grief at the home of her former husband. She has nursed the child in company with his father. She only leaves the bedside when the doctor pronounces his patient out of danger. The woman collapses. Max finds her weak, her nerves shattered by the strain. He has touched her hand across the body of their dying child, but not her heart. He makes an impassioned appeal, but is repulsed. She loves her new husband, she says, and has written him at least once every day. The mother of Max also tells the harassed woman of the love she has aroused in her son — a love purified by deep sorrow. At last Marianne retires to the apartment in which she slept the night when Max de Pogis brought her to his château. Max enters. It is a scene that even when read touches the heart. The man is in earnest. He is humble. He tells of his love — a love compared to which the second husband's is nothing. He plays the old variations with a woman's heart — a maternal heart — as the instrument. This music proves dangerous. It sets reverberating familiar chords. The hour is midnight. The father of her son looks into her eyes and points to the mementos

of their early love. He clasps her to his breast, and the curtain falls on the subjugation of the woman. The ghost of the past has made her forget the present.

Do not be in haste to condemn her weakness. The dramatist is pitiless enough in his judgment. She goes to her parents', not her husband's home, and half mad with remorse tells — without any attempt to sentimentally varnish her guilt — her mother everything. That lady is not surprised, shocked as she may be. Max, after all, is the husband of Marianne in the sight of God, let legislators decree what they may. It is the triumph of the mother, the triumph of the species Jules Gaultier would call it. The father is told, and he grieves mightily. And Le Breuil, the new husband, what of him! Shuddering, Marianne declares that henceforth for her he no longer exists. She has descended lower than the lowest, but there remains a still deeper gulf of vileness, and into it she will not fall. Le Breuil clamours for admittance. He must know why his wife has not gone to her house. She will not see him. He, the gentle Guillaume, becomes quarrelsome. Then she resolves to meet him. This interview is another masterpiece of observation and dramatic values. He begs for an explanation — he suspects that her nerves have been upset by her visit and by the illness of her son, though he is too tender and chivalric to cast this in her teeth. He is angelic in his behaviour, but to no avail. Some

subtle chemistry has transformed the nature of Marianne. She respects, she pities her husband — live with him she cannot. Aroused by her obduracy, Guillaume rushes at her to kiss her. In a blinding flash she sees herself further dishonoured — and to avoid the shame and desolation of it all she confesses. It is an awful revelation. The unhappy man cannot believe his ears. He is brutal, hysterical, wretched, and finally in a fury throws the woman from him and rushes out to kill the wrecker of his happiness.

Fifth acts are always dangerous. Ibsen's fifth acts are, as a rule, his weakest. The playwright who has the genius of the first act has seldom the genius of the fifth. M. Hervieu's first acts invariably puzzle or offend. No writer has to create a new public with each new play as has this one. The reason is because his themes and their bold, unconventional manipulation set on edge the nerves of his audience.

In his drama, Hervieu is the great serious artist. He never trifles, despite his gift of irony, with his characters ; never mocks them — above all, never lets them escape his iron grasp. There is nothing of the *improvisatore* in him ; he has not the romantic passion of George Sand nor Ibsen's spirit of revolt ; nor is he a vindicator of social wrongs like M. Brieux. He is a dramatist, perhaps, fathered by the unique Henry Becque, with a vision not unlike Stendhal's. The intensity of this vision, the sincerity of the man,

and the utter absence in him of the theatrical wonder-worker have endeared him to M. Brunetière.

Every big play has at least one act that evokes violent discussion. Le Dédale is no exception. Its fifth act is a strain upon our credulity, though sober second thought compels one to accept the dénouement, violent as it is. A duel is inevitable between the two men; the death of either one would be banal; Marianne cannot without violating the proprieties be thrust into the arms of either man; besides, the woman, horrified by her error, an error seemingly thrust upon her by malignant fate, has now conceived an aversion to both Max and Guillaume. Max persecutes her, follows her to her country home, while Guillaume silently tracks him. She meets the latter in an arbour and refuses to live with him again. The injured man encounters Max as that seducer gayly proceeds through the garden. Their meeting is a stirring moment. After a few bitter words Guillaume drags Max over a cliff into a raging stream, where their bodies are swept irrecoverably away. Unconscious of this double tragedy, Marianne is heard calling: "Louis, Louis!" and as the little boy runs in the curtain falls on a mute, touching display of maternal love.

The reading of the play gives the impression of a melodramatic touch in this catastrophe. It seems at first as if the author in despair had solved his problem by a hasty theatrical stroke.

As performed by the inimitable Bartet and Le Bargy and Paul Mounet there is only a faint suggestion of the theatric. Like the divorce theme, the tragedy at the close is but an aid to expand M. Hervieu's thesis. Not the inviolability of ecclesiastical marriage, not the dispute of two men for the possession of a woman, but his thesis is the exposition of the truth that a man and a woman are forever linked by that bond of flesh, their child. Otherwise the dramatist holds no brief for heredity or one against divorce. He selected his material like an artist. What would have been the result if Marianne had had a child by her second husband? Probably we should have had no play. We must accept the premises of Hervieu or else avoid challenging his conclusions. In the remotest analysis a drama may be an entity for the crucible of the metaphysician; yet if it be great it will defy the test of logic as does life itself. And there is not only logic in Paul Hervieu's Le Dédale, but life, a great section of throbbing, real life. It is certainly the most significant French play thus far of the new century.

I tested the validity of the foregoing criticism written after reading the play by attending a performance at the Français, Paris, October 20, 1904. Madame Bartet was superb, far exceeding my rather suspicious expectations. Her serenity and dignity in the earlier acts; the

maternal anguish, the maternal — literally — passion that caused her defection; the remorse and almost hysterical confession, were all indicated by this mistress of fine nuances. Le Bargy has seldom been better cast, while Paul Mounet was excellent; and I was almost convinced by the finale, though I wish the playwright, taking a hint from Ibsen, had ended on an unresolved cadence. But M. Hervieu is too logical, too Gallic, to treat his audiences thus. He even re-wrote The Enigma so as to make the end clearer.

The Enigma, which London saw in March, 1902, at Wyndham's Theatre, was then called Cæsar's Wife, which is, as Osman Edwards justly remarks, a pompous title.

The English cast of L'Enigme was: Mrs. Tree as Léonore, Fay Davis as Giselle, Fred Kerr as Marquis de Neste, Leonard Boyne as Vivarce. The story is simple, the treatment rather classic: Act I is lengthy, barren of incident, and bitter in its polemical tone; Act II is old-fashioned in its development and climax, yet the last words spoken are distinctly novel and a tremendous indictment of the man who slays the woman on the plea of outraged honour. Here is Dumas's *Tué-là* reversed with a vengeance. Yet one platitude supplants another. If the brute who kills his wife because she is unfaithful to him is to be succeeded by the lady who deceives her husband because he is unpleasant to her, where does the moral come

in? It is a new convention driving out an old. As Hervieu is *feministe*, his sympathy leads him to espouse the cause of the woman. Without wishing to be ungallant, we may ask what is the difference between the woman with a half-dozen lovers and the man with a half-dozen mistresses? In the eyes of the law, in the eyes of religion, none; in the eyes of society a vast deal — if the woman is discovered. Not if the man is; but before a jury-box composed of twelve intelligent men the woman who — as popular parlance has it — "sins" has every chance of being pitied and pardoned. Here the elemental sympathy of the male for the female counts heavily against testimony and judge's charge.

Dumas knew this (if he had lived in America the fact would have been driven home every morning in the newspapers) when he wrote Francillon, especially when he wrote Femme de Claude. *Tué-là!* was his ferocious advice. So M. Hervieu set himself to preach the contrary. In Les Paroles Restent, his first dramatic essay, even in Les Tenailles, and La Loi de l'Homme, the wordiness becomes most monotonous. In The Enigma, we notice the same long-winded discussions à la Dumas as in Princesse Georges, with the *raissonneur* in the centre of the stage, — in this case Marquis de Neste, — weighing the merits of the various speeches, spouting many himself, altogether turning the expository act into a debating society. In their

revolt against the so-called "well-made play," the newer Parisian dramatists have gone to the other extreme.

However, the plot of The Enigma is distinctly worth the telling. Two brothers, noblemen, De Gourgiran by name, are married to two charming women, Léonore and Giselle. Here is a quartet instead of the eternal duo with the triangle hung over the door like a sinister horseshoe presaging ill luck. To this double family are added the elderly Marquis, who is a cousin to the brothers, and a young man, Vivarce by name. He is the unknown quantity of this well-mixed combination. At first the household seems like most happy ones — without anything worthy of chronicling. The brothers are mighty Nimrods, the wives have children to interest them, Vivarce to amuse them, the Marquis to lecture them. Everything goes on oiled wheels until the gamekeeper of the estate tells his masters that poachers are abroad. The fraternal pair resolve on stealing out before daybreak and surprising the rascals. The respective characters of the brothers do not show much diversity; both live to hunt, and incidentally they love their wives better, much better, than their dogs. About this there must be no mistake. Honest, upright, inflexible, hard-hearted, hard-headed persons, they are absolutely lacking in humour. They bore their wives, and if you would tell them this, they would shrug shoulders philosophically and remark that women, especially good wives, were intended to be bored by husbands.

But note their scowling features if that drawing-room animal, the professional lover, is mentioned! Both empty their choicest vials of objurgation and fury upon the luckless beast's head. In fact, a discussion is started about the treatment a man should accord an erring wife. The one rather would shoot such a wife through the heart, the other brother would slay the lover and keep the wife alive and near at hand so that she might be tortured. This cold-blooded proposition arouses the righteous indignation of Giselle, who protests in the name of her sex, in the name of humanity. She becomes so agitated that the Marquis, whose suspicions have been aroused for some time, suspects the lady of carrying on an intrigue with Vivarce. Earlier in the scene he has privately accused Vivarce of betraying one of his hosts' wives, but which one he cannot say.

Now here is where the puzzle comes in and the psychology evaporates. The Marquis, so he relates, while suffering from insomnia, gets up one fine night and sees Vivarce vanishing in the door of the château, which door was opened by a female hand. Whose? Evidently one of the married women. Which one? Ah, that is the enigma! Vivarce feebly admits his shameful behaviour, though he refuses to give the name of the fair sinner. The old nobleman is perplexed. He advises flight. He talks like an ancient uncle from the country, who does not wish to borrow money from his city relatives

— that is, he talks sense, and as it dribbles in one ear and out the other of his moonstruck companion, he realizes the futility of his well-meant sermon. Young men will be fools and lunatics — and he might have added, when they are not, heaven help their wives in later years!

Unknown to the others the brothers resolve on lying in wait for the poachers. After some conjugal bantering they retire. Their wives sit up to talk matters over. The door has been barred; it is very close within; Giselle proposes that they open the house. She essays in vain to lift the heavy oaken bar. Leonore tries. She succeeds. The moonlight is mellow without, and the summer night sends pleasant air and odours into the living room. At last the two women prepare for bed. Novels are selected, and with lamps in hand they are leaving the room without thought of the open door. Giselle remembers it and returns. Leonore bids her not to bother — there are no thieves in the neighbourhood. The curtain falls.

Up to this moment there is no way of recognizing the "guilty" woman. Dishonours are about even. Giselle, to be sure, is passionate in her protestations of contempt for the brutality of husbands who take the law into their own hands. But Leonore unbars the door. Giselle recalls the fact that it should not be open, and Leonore tells her not to worry. Which one is it? And before you rush rashly to a conclusion remember that the dramatist knows more than his

audience, and that he contrives pitfalls for the unwary. Both women seem guilty, both may be innocent. One of the brothers comes softly into the room; both have agreed not to worry their wives about the poachers. The door is found unbolted. The first comer surmises that his brother has preceded him, but the gamekeeper tells him the door was open. Then the other brother enters. Surprise! But there is no time for this sentiment, as a man steals through the dimly lighted room. After a brief, fierce struggle he is pinioned. A lantern reveals the features of Vivarce. How did he come there? Why did he come out of the women's apartments at this hour in the morning? Hate and destruction are in the air.

His answers are evasive. He is nervous — wanted a cigarette. The lie is cast back in his teeth. And then a woman, holding a candle, rushes in with pale face. It is Leonore. She has been awakened, so she avers, by the shock of voices. Her husband sternly inquires her whereabouts a few moments before. She has an excuse ready. She swears she is not guilty, and even kneels to Vivarce, beseeching him to clear her. It is too much. Her husband plucks her by the arm, and then, as his brother questions her too closely, the man wavers to the side of his wife. Perhaps, after all, it was Giselle. Yes, where is Giselle? The husband of the absent one is swift to defend her. He goes to her room and finds her fast asleep. Aha! says

the other woman, and awakens her. Confused by the lights, the accusation, the clash of words, she is the very picture of a guilty woman as she enters in her white night robe, her hair unbound, her features suffused in tears. Besides, did she not make some very audacious speeches earlier in the evening defending the right to love of a woman wearied of her husband? Free love — ah, odious phrase! It damns her at once.

The trouble with a situation of this kind is that the spectator, carried away by his curiosity, forgets all about the play of character, the problem involved. It is The Lady or the Tiger over again, and not so cleverly handled as that little masterpiece, for, as we shall presently see, Hervieu solves the riddle in a very prosaic fashion. A big interrogation point at the end would be the only excuse for a recrudescence of a play of the Dumas sort. When Richard Strauss composed the enigmatic tonalities at the close of his Tone poem, Also Sprach Zarathustra, he did so because he could not logically leave us on a full harmonic close. Since Hervieu did not develop his theme broadly and allowed it to degenerate into the theatric device of guessing the girl, he might have followed Frank Stockton and Richard Strauss — withheld the complete dénouement and sent us home wondering. But his artistic conscience began to operate at the close of Act II, and not daring in Act III, he despatches his young lover out to the dewy morn, there to shoot himself. This suicide cuts

the tangle. The sister who quails at the news is the guilty one — a Solomon-like judgment, if ever there was one.

The gunshot rouses the women. Leonore it is who shudders and screams; Giselle is only shocked. The complacent face of her husband at this juncture is a study in selfishness. Leonore's husband throttles her and is pulled off just in time. He bids her live — he knows how to torture; and as the curtain falls the Marquis in the centre of the picture invokes the curse of heaven on a social system that tolerates such hideous cruelty.

It may be seen that the intellectual playwright takes advantage of a situation in Pagliacci or in Catulle Mendès's La Femme de Tabarin; when the lover is being killed or is killed, the grief of the "guilty" wife betrays her secret to the world. It is lacking in novelty, yet a sound situation psychologically. The torture motive is not new.

However, Paul Hervieu's reputation does not stand or fall on this drama any more than it does on his novels, Flirt and L'Armature. Les Paroles Restent has a theme cleverly invented, above all cleverly handled. A man sets in motion a lie about a young girl in society, though he believes it is the truth. Later he meets and loves her. His remorse is great when he discovers that she is innocent. To make reparation (oh, masculine vanity of vanities!) he resolves to confess both his love and his fault.

He does so. The woman, Regine de Vesles, is outraged in her pride, in her love, to discover that her secret calumniator is the man she has adored. She parts from him. A duel is precipitated — lugged in by the hair, really — and De Nohan is dangerously wounded. Naturally Regine goes to his bedside and pardons him. They are sure to be happy. Alas! *les paroles restent*, and after De Nohan hears repeated his vile slander he dies. The situations are effective throughout, the character-drawing subtle.

This play is full of melodrama, and, as has been pointed out, contains "several weapons borrowed from the arsenal of the inexhaustible Scribe." Hervieu followed it with Les Tenailles, which was at once a challenge to his critic and a greater play. *Tenailles* (nippers) — horrible word! Here the author gives us human nature in the raw. A woman is married to a man she does not love. He, it appears, makes no attempt to secure her love. She really loves a famous man, a traveller. She tells her husband so. She will not deceive him, as other feebler women would; she must leave at once. But the husband of Irene Fergan is cool-headed. He asks his wife how she proposes to escape the hateful marriage tie. She must give the law a reason, a motive. Collusion is the only remedy, and he will not enter into any such conspiracy. Then she declares she will run away. Not far, he calmly replies, for there is always the police. No matter what she does, he will not let her go.

Bowing her head, the woman submits. The wife is the prisoner of the husband, the woman bond-slave of the man, despite all our gabbling about emancipation and equal rights in this enlightened century.

Ten years pass, when the curtain again rises. There is a child; the home is seemingly a placid one. The little son must be sent to school. Another crisis. There is a terrible duel of words and will. Enraged she cries, "The child is not yours," and then confesses — no, confesses is not the word, rather boasts, that she had a lover, the man she always loved, the traveller. The husband now no longer claims the other's son; he will even grant the divorce. The culmination comes when Irene refuses to be thrust out of doors, — the child has just passed through the room, — she has borne the agony of ten years. They must go hand in hand manacled to the end, let the nippers gall as they will. There is the child. Its future is at stake. "But," the man whimpers, "you are guilty and I am innocent." — "No," she says, "we are only two miserable people, and misery knows none but equals." The answer is like the harsh stroke of a savage alarm bell. It startled all Paris for many months. *Les paroles restent!*

The Law of Man is even more tense and disagreeable than its predecessor. Herein the problem posed is this (for with Hervieu the play is always a problem; like Ibsen he asks questions and seldom answers them, though it may

be premised that while he has much of Ibsen's gloom and love for the unusual, he lacks the cold, concentrated logic of the Norwegian): A woman surprises her husband by means of letters, but does not leave him. Her daughter falls in love with the son of the woman who has caused the trouble. Poor wife, poor mother, she is confused at these crossroads of misery. Sacrifice her daughter and appease her vengeance, or — hold her silence for evermore? She prefers the former, and summoning the husband of her own husband's mistress, the father of the young man who seeks the hand of her innocent daughter, she tells the secret. After the first natural rage, this undeceived man, more merciful than the woman, insists on her silence. Two innocent young folk must not have their happiness slain because of their parents' sins. And as it is his right, the selfish and wretched woman must submit. A way is found to make the lovers happy, and the play ends, leaving all sorts of interrogation marks in the air. There are big things in this drama.

La Course du Flambeau played by Réjane with such striking effect is judged by some of Hervieu's admirers as his masterpiece. It is not, though an exceedingly interesting work replete with wisdom and several strong studies of character. Sabine Revel, who sacrifices her mother for the sake of her daughter and is in turn herself sacrificed, illustrates the not uncommon fate of a selfish daughter and a too

fond mother. The Greek motto embodied in the title — the passing on of the illuminated torch, according to Lucretius, at the "lampadophories" festival in Athens — is employed by the dramatist as a symbol of the chain of life, the light passed on from one generation to another with the sacrificing of the old by the young which characterizes human existence.

Yet there is no hint of Ibsen in this symbol; Hervieu is a painter of manners, and a psychologist, not a poet. He confessed to me, while graciously submitting to be "interviewed," that Ibsen has had little part in his development. He is a true Frenchman and really derives from Dumas *fils* in his love of the problem posed; while his cerebral temperament makes him more of a disciple of Stendhal and Becque than of the very emotional, modern Germans and Scandinavians. Yet he has an *emotive* temperament — a glance at his sympathetic eyes will prove it. He is a man with too large a head for his frame. He feels too deeply to be happy. M. Alfred Binet, in his precise psychological study of the dramatist, describes his sober methods of travail, his slow composition, his philosopher's dislike of the hasty or the improvised, and his fondness for clearly articulated dialogue. He has the logical imagination, he disdains the Zola "human documents" in preparing his story, and while he is by nature an ironist, he is too serious in his outlook on life to play the part of a mystifier. "Irony is the

speech of the timid man," he said to me, when we spoke of Becque and his too cynical disciples. An anxious sincerity is the key-note of M. Hervieu's character. He abhors the facile triumphs of the Parisian play-maker who dallies with ignoble themes. A finely attuned intellect, a plentiful sympathy with suffering, a special sensitiveness to the soul feminine, combined with real artistry, — though he despises mere technical dexterity, — all have made Paul Hervieu the present master-psychologist of the French stage.

VI

THE QUINTESSENCE OF SHAW

I

To my friend, George Bernard Shaw, the Celtic superman, critic, novelist, socialist, and preface writer, to whom the present author — *circa* 1890 — played the part of a critical finger-post for the everlasting benefit (he sincerely hopes) of the great American public; and to whom he now dedicates this particular essay in gratitude for the rare and stimulating pleasure afforded him by the Shaw masques, the Shavian philosophy, and also the vivid remembrance of several personal encounters at London and Bayreuth.

THE announcement that Bernard Shaw, moralist, Fabianite, vegetarian, playwright, critic, Wagnerite, Ibsenite, jester to the cosmos, and the most serious man on the planet, had written a play on the subject of Don Juan did not surprise his admirers. As Nietzsche philosophized with a hammer, so G. B. S. hammers popular myths. If you have read his Cæsar and Cleopatra you will know what I mean. This witty, sarcastic piece is the most daring he has attempted. Some years ago I described the Shaw literary pedigree as — W. S. Gilbert out of Ibsen. His plays are full of modern odds and ends, and in form are anything from the Robertsonian com-

edy to the Gilbertian extravaganza. They may be called psychical farce, an intellectual *comédie rosse* — for his people are mostly a blackguard crew of lively marionettes all talking pure Shaw-ese. Mr. Shaw has invented a new individual in literature who for want of a better name could be called the *Super-Cad;* he is Nietzsche's Superman turned "bounder" — and sometimes the sex is feminine.

We wonder what sort of drama this remarkable Hibernian would have produced if he had been a flesh-eater. If he is so brilliant on bran, what could he not have accomplished on blood! One thing is certain — at the cosmical banquet where Shaw sits is the head of the table — for him.

When Bernard Shaw told a gaping world that he was only a natural-born mountebank with a cart and a trumpet, a sigh of relief was exhaled in artistic London. So many had been taking him seriously and swallowing his teachings, preachings, and *pronunciamentos*, that to hear the merryman was only shamming, came as a species of liberation from a cruel obsession. Without paying the customary critical toll, Shaw had slipped duty free into England all manners of damnable doctrines. What George Moore attempted in a serious manner George Shaw, a fellow-Irishman, succeeded in accomplishing without the *chorale* of objurgation, groans, exclamations of horror, and blasts of puritanical cant. Thus Proudhon, Marx, Lassalle, Ibsen, Wagner, Nietzsche, and a lot of free-thinkers

in socialism, religion, philosophy, and art, walked unmolested through the pages of critical reviews, while Mr. Moore was almost pilloried for advocating naturalism, while Vizetelly was sent to prison for translating Zola.

After the Shaw criticisms came the novels, then the plays. The prefaces of the latter are literature, and will be remembered with joy when the plays are forgotten. In them the author has distilled the quintessence of Shaw. They will be classics some day, as the Dryden prefaces are classics. Nevertheless, in the plays we find the old Shaw masquerading, this time behind the footlights. He is still the preacher, Fabian debater, socialist, vegetarian, lycanthrope, and normally abnormal man of the early days — though he prides himself on his abnormal normality. Finding that the essay did not reach a wide enough audience, the wily Celt mounts the rostrum and blarneys his listeners something after this manner: —

"Here's my hustings; from here will I teach, preach, and curse the conventions of society. Come all ye who are tired of the property fallacy! There is but one Karl Marx, and I am his living prophet. Shakespeare must go — Ibsen is to rule. Wagner was a Fabianite; the Ring proves it. Come all ye who are heaven-laden with the moralities! I am the living witness for Nietzsche. I will teach children to renounce the love of parents; parents to despise their offspring; husbands to hate

their wives; wives to loathe their husbands; and brothers and sisters will raise warring hands after my words have entered their souls. Whatever is is wrong — to alter Pope. The prostitute classes, — I do not balk at the ugly word, — clergymen, doctors, lawyers, statesmen, journalists, are deceiving you. They speak in divers and lying tongues. I alone possess the prophylactic against the evils of life. Here it is: Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant; and Three Plays for Puritans."

But Shaw only removed another of his innumerable masks. Beware, says Nietzsche, of the autobiographies of great men. He was thinking of Richard Wagner. His warning applies to Bernard Shaw, who is a great comedian and a versatile. He has spoken through so many different masks that the real Shaw is yet to be seen. Perhaps on his death-bed some stray phrase will illuminate with its witty gleam his true soul's nature. He has played tag with this soul so long that some of it has been lost in the game. Irishman born, he is not genial after the Oliver Goldsmith type; he resembles much more closely Dean Swift, minus that man's devouring genius. When will the last mask be lifted — and, awful to relate, will it, when lifted, reveal the secret? A master hypnotist perhaps he may be, illuding the world with the mask idea. And what a comical thing it would be to find him smiling at the end and remarking, "I fooled you, Brethren, didn't I?"

In his many rôles one trait has obstinately remained, the trait of irresistible waggery. Yet we sadly suspect it. What if this declaration of charlatanism were but a mask! What if Shaw were really sincere! What if he really meant to be sincere in his various lectures and comedies! What if his assumption of insincerity were sincere! His sincerity insincere! The thought confuses. In one of his plays — The Philanderer — a certain character has five or six natures. Shaw again, *toujours* Shaw!

Joke of all jokes, I really imagine that Shaw is a sentimentalist in private; and that he has been so sentimental, romantic, in his youth, that an inversion has taken place in his feelings. Swift's hatred of mankind was a species of inverted lyricism; so was Flaubert's; so may be Shaw's. Fancy him secretly weeping over Jane Eyre, or holding a baby in his lap, or — richest of all fancies — occasionally eating sausage and drinking beer! I met him, once upon a time, in Bayreuth. He spoke then in unmeasured terms of its beer drinkers, and added, without the ghost of a smile, that breweries should be converted into insane asylums.

Whether we take him seriously or not, he is a delightful, an entertaining writer. His facile use, with the aid of the various mouthpieces he assumes at will, of the ideas of Nietzsche, Wagner, Ibsen, and Strindberg, fairly dazzles. He despises wit at bottom, using its forms as a medium for the communication of his theories.

Art for art's sake is a contradiction to this writer. He must have a sense of beauty, but he never boasts of it; rather does he seem to consider it something naked, almost shameful — something to be hidden away. So his men are always deriding art, though working at it like devils on high pay. This puritanical vein has grown with the years, as it has with Tolstoy. Only Shaw never wasted his youth in riotous living, as did Tolstoy.

He had no money, no opportunities, no taste. A fierce ascetic and a misogynist, he will have no regrets at threescore and ten; no sweet memories of headaches — he is a teetotaller; no heartaches — he is too busy with his books; and no bitter aftertaste for having wronged a fellow-being. Behold, Bernard Shaw is a good man, has led the life of a saint, worked like a hero against terrible odds, and is the kindest-hearted man in London. Now we have reached another mask — the mask of altruism. Nearly all his earnings went to the needy; his was, and is, a practical socialism. He never let his right hand know the extent of his charities, and mark this, — no one else knew of it. Yet good deeds, like murder, will out. His associates ceased deriding the queer clothes, the flannel shirt, and the absence of evening dress; his money was spent on others. So, too, his sawdust menu, — his carrots, cabbage, and brown bread, — it did not cost much, his eating, for his money was needed by poorer folk. So you see what a

humbug is this dear old Diogenes, who growls cynically at the human race, abhors sentiment-mongers, and despises conventional government, art, religion, and philosophy. He is an arch-sentimentalist, underneath whose frown are concealed tears of pity. Another mask torn away — Bernard Shaw, philanthropist!

He tells us in the preface to Cashel Byron's Profession — which sounds like the title of a Charles Lever novel — that he had a narrow escape from being a novelist at the age of twenty-six. He still shudders over it. He wrote five novels, three of which we know, to wit: Cashel Byron's Profession, An Unsocial Socialist, Love Among the Artists — hideous and misleading title. Robert Louis Stevenson took a great fancy to Cashel Byron and its stunning eulogies of pugilism. It was even dramatized in this country. With Hazlitt and George Meredith (oh! unforgettable prize-fight in The Amazing Marriage) Mr. Shaw praised the noble art of *sluggerei*. The Unsocial Socialist contains at least one act of a glorious farce comedy. He is Early British in his comedic writing. It is none the less capital fun.

This book or tract — it is hardly a novel — contains among other extraordinary things a eulogy of photography that would delight the soul of a Steichen. Shaw places it far above painting because of its verisimilitude! It also introduces a lot of socialistic talk which is very unconvincing; the psycho-physiologist

would really pronounce the author a perfect specimen in full flowering of the saintly anarch. There is a rôle played by a character — Shaw? — which recalls Leonard Charteris in a later play, The Philanderer. All of his men are modelled off the same block. They are a curious combination of blackguard, philosopher, "bounder," artist, and comedian. His women! Recall Stevenson's dismayed exclamation at the Shaw women! They are creatures who have read Ibsen; are, one is sure, dowdy; but they interest. While you wonder at the strength of their souls, you do not miss the size of their feet. Mr. Shaw refuses to see woman as a heroine. She is sometimes a breeder of sinners, always a chronicler of the smallest kind of small beer, and for fear this sounds like an Iago estimate, he dowers her with an astounding intellectual equipment, and then lets the curious compound work out its own salvation.

He is much more successful with his servants; witness Bashville in Cashel Byron's Profession, most original of lackeys, and the tenderly funny old waiter in You Never Can Tell, a bitter farce well sprinkled with the Attic salt of irony. Otherwise Mr. Shaw has spent his time tilting at flagellation, at capital punishment, at the abuse of punctuation, at the cannibalistic habit of eating the flesh of harmless animals at Christmas, at Going to Church, extolling Czolgosz — heavens! the list is a league long. His novels as a whole are disappointing, though

George Meredith has assured us in the first chapter of Diana that brain stuff in fiction is not lean stuff. But there are some concessions to be made to the Great God Beauty, and these Mr. Shaw has not seen fit to make. Episodes of brilliancy, force, audacity, there are; but episodes only. The psychology of a musician is admirably set forth in Love Among the Artists, and the story, in addition, contains one of the most lifelike portraits of a Polish *pianiste* that has ever been painted. John Sargent could have done no better in laying bare a soul. Ugliness is rampant — ugliness and brutality. It is all as invigorating as a bath of salt water when the skin is peeled off — it burns; you howl; Shaw grins. He hates with all the vigour of his big brain and his big heart to hear of the infliction of physical pain. He does not always spare his readers. Three hundred years ago he would have roasted heretics, for there is much of the grand inquisitor, the John Calvin, the John Knox, in Shaw. He will rob himself of his last copper to give you food, and he will belabour you with words that assault the tympanum if you disagree with him on the subject of Ibsen, Wagner, or — anything he likes.

Beefsteak, old Scotch ale, a pipe, and Montaigne — are what he needs for one year. Then his inhumane criticism of poor, stumbling mankind's foibles might be tempered. Shaw despises weakness. He follows to the letter Nietzsche's injunction, Be hard! And there

is something in him of Ibsen's pitiless attitude toward the majority, which is always in the wrong; yet is, all said and done, the majority. Facts, reality, truth — no Gradgrind ever demanded them more imperiously than Heervater Shaw, whose red beard and locks remind one of Conrad in Die Meistersinger. Earth folk do everything to dodge the facts of life, to them cold, harsh, and at the same time fantastic. Every form of anodyne, ethical, intellectual, æsthetical, is resorted to to deaden the pain of reality. We work to forget to live; our religions, art, philosophy, patriotism, are so many buffers between the soul of man and bitter truth.

Shaw wants the truth at all hazards; his habit of veracity is like that of Gregers's Werle, is shocking. So he dips his subjects into a bath of muriatic acid and seems surprised at their wrigglings and their screams. "But I don't want to hear the truth!" yells the victim, who then limps back to his comfortable lies. And the one grievous error is that our gallant slayer of dragons, our Celtic Siegfried, does not believe in the illusions of art. Its veils, consoling and beautiful, he will not have, and thus it is that his dramas are amusing, witty, brilliant, scarefying, but never poetic, never beautiful, and seldom sound the deeper tones of humanity. With an artist's brain, he stifles the artist's soul in him — as Ibsen never did. With all his liberalism he cannot be liberal to liberalism, as Gilbert Chesterton so neatly puts it.

The Perfect Wagnerite and The Quintessence of Ibsenism are two supernally clever *jeux d'esprit.* As he reads Shaw and Fabianism into the Ring of the Nibelungs, so his Ibsen is transformed into a magnified image of Shaw dropping ideas from on high with Olympian indifference. This pamphlet, among the first of its kind in English, now seems a trifle old-fashioned in its interpretation of the Norwegian dramatist—possibly because he is something so different from what Mr. Shaw pictured him. We are never shown Ibsen the artist, but always the social reformer with an awful frown. He was a fighter for Ibsen, when in London Ibsen was once regarded as a perverter of morals. Bravery is Bernard's trump card. He never flinched yet, whether answering cat-calls from a first night's gallery or charging with pen lowered lance-fashion upon some unfortunate clerical blockhead who endeavoured to prove that hell is too good for sinners.

It is easy to praise Mozart to-day; not so easy to demonstrate the genius of Richard Strauss. Wagner in 1888 was still a bogie-man, a horrid hobgoblin threatening the peace of academic British music. Shaw took up the fight, just as he fought for Degas and Manet when he was an art critic. I still preserve with reverence his sweeping answer to Max Nordau. It wiped Nordau off the field of discussion.

And the plays! They, too, are controversial. They all prove something, and prove it so hard

that presently the play is swallowed up by its thesis — the horse patiently follows the cart. It may not be art, but it is magnificent Shaw. You can skip the plays, not the prefaces. Widowers' Houses is the most unpleasant, ugly, damnably perverse of the ten. The writer had read Ibsen's An Enemy of the People too closely. Its drainpipes, and not its glorification of the individual, got into his brain. It filtered forth bereft of its strength and meaning in this piece, with its nasty people, its stupidities. How could Shaw be so philistine, so much like a vestryman interested in pauper lodgings? In the implacable grasp of Ibsen, this sordid theme would have been beaten on a red-hot anvil until shaped to something of purpose and power. Shaw was not blacksmith enough to swing the Ibsen hammer and handle the Ibsen bellows. He has written me on this subject that if I were a resident of London I would see my way clearer toward liking this play. It is, he asserts, a transcript of the truth — which still leaves my argument on its legs.

The Philanderer, with its irresponsible levity and unexpected contortions, is a comedy of the true Shaw order. It is his Wild Duck, for in it he pokes fun at an Ibsen club, at the New Woman, and the New Sentiment, at almost everything he upholds in other plays and ways. There is a dramatic critic slopping over with British sentiment and other liquids. The women are absolutely incredible. The first act, like

most of the Shaw first acts, is the best; best because, in his efforts to get his people going, the dramatist has little time to sermonize. He usually gets the chance later, to the detriment of his structure. The first act of The Philanderer would have made Henry Becque smile. It has something of the Frenchman's mordant irony — and then you never know what is going to happen. The behaviour of the two women recalls a remark of Shaw's apropos of Strindberg; Strindberg, who "shows that the female Yahoo, measured by romantic standards, is viler than her male dupe and slave." Here the conditions are reversed; there is no romance; the dupes are women, and also the Yahoos. The exposure of Julia's soul, poor, mean, sentimental, suffering little creature, withal heroic, would please Strindberg himself. The play has an autobiographic ring.

As to Mrs. Warren's Profession. It was played January 12, 1902, in London, by the Stage Society. Mr. Grein says that Mrs. Warren's Profession is literature for the study. The mother is a bore, wonderfully done in spots (the spots especially) and the daughter a chilly, waspish prig. The men are better; Sir George Crofts and the philandering young fellow could not be clearer expressed in terms of ink. I imagine that in a performance they must be extremely vital. And that weak old *roué* of a clergyman — why is Shaw so severe on clergymen? For the rest, Mrs. Warren's Profession

creates a disagreeable impression, as the author intended it should. I consider it his biggest, and also his most impossible, *opus*.

You Can Never Tell, Arms and the Man, Candida, and The Devil's Disciple are a quartet difficult to outpoint for prodigal humour and ingenious fantasy. In London the first named was voted irresistibly funny. It is funny, and in a new way, though the framework is old-fashioned British farce newly veneered by the malicious, the roistering humour of Shaw. Arms and the Man and The Devil's Disciple have been in Mr. Mansfield's repertory for years; they need no comment further than saying that the first has something of the Gilbertian Palace of Truth topsy-turvying quality (Louka is a free paraphrase of Regina in Ghosts, though she talks Shaw with great fluency), with a wholly original content and characterization; and the second is perverse melodrama.

Candida is not for mixed audiences. Christian socialism is caviare to the general. In characterization there is much variety; the heroine — if there be such an anomaly as a Shaw heroine — is most engaging. Every time I read Candida I feel myself on the trail of somebody; it is all in the air. The Lady from the Sea comes back when in that last scene, where the extraordinary young poet Marchbanks, a combination of the spiritual qualities of Shelley, Shaw, Ibsen's Stranger, and Shelley again, dares the fatuous James Morell to put his wife Candida to the

test. It is one of the oddest situations in dramatic literature, and it is all "prepared" with infinite skill. The dénouement is another of Mr. Shaw's shower baths; withal a perfectly proper and highly moral ending. You grind your teeth over it, as Mr. Shaw peeps across the top of the page, indulging in one of his irritating dental displays.

The Man of Destiny is a mystification in one act. Napoleon talks the purest Balzac when he describes the English, and Mr. Shaw manipulates the wires industriously. It's good sport of its genre.

Captain Brassbound's Conversion is pure farce. But the joy of Cæsar and Cleopatra is abounding. You chortle over it as chortled Stevenson over the footman. A very devil of a play, one to read after Froude, Michelet, Shakespeare, or Voltaire for the real facts of the case. Since Suetonius, it is the first attempt at true Cæsarean history. And the stage directions out-Maeterlinck Maeterlinck with their elaborate intercalations. The gorgeous humour of it all!

Arms and the Man has been translated into German and played in Germany. What will the Germans say to Cæsar and Cleopatra? They take Shaw too seriously now, which is almost as bad as not taking him seriously at all. What will the doctors of history do when the amazing character of Cleopatra is dissected? If Shaw had never written another line but this bubbling

study of antiquity, in which the spirit of the opera bouffe has not entered, he would be entitled to a free pass to that pantheon wherein our beloved Mark Twain sits enthroned. It is all truth-telling on a miraculous plane of reality, a reality which modulates and merges into fantasy. One almost forgets the prefaces and the notes after reading Cæsar and Cleopatra.

Whether he will ever vouchsafe the world a masterpiece, who can say? Why demand so much? Is not he in himself a masterpiece? It depends on his relinquishment of a too puritanical attitude toward art, life, and roast beef. He is too pious. Never mind his second-hand Nietzsche, his Diabolonian ethics, and his modern version of Carlylean Baphometic Baptisms. They are all in his eye — that absolutely normal eye with the suppressed Celtic twinkle. He doesn't mean a word he utters. (Who does when writing of Shaw?) I firmly believe he says his prayers every night with the family before he goes to his Jaeger-flannel couch!

II

Candida is the very quintessence of her creator. Many prefer this sprightly sermon disguised as a comedy to Mr. Bernard Shaw's more serious works. Yet serious it is. No latter-day paradoxioneer — to coin a monster word, for the Shaws, Chestertons, *et al.* — evokes laughter so easily as the Irishman. His is a

cold intellectual wit, a Swiftian wit, minus the hearty and wholesome obscenity of the great Dublin dean. But it is often misleading. We laugh when we should reflect. We laugh when we might better hang our heads — this is meant for the average married and bachelor man. Shaw strikes fire in almost every sentence he puts into Candida's honest mouth. After reading his eloquent tribute to Ibsen, the crooked places in Candida become plainer; her mission is not alone to undeceive but to love; not only to bruise hearts but to heal them.

In a singularly vivid passage on page 38 of The Quintessence of Ibsenism, Mr. Shaw writes: "When Blake told men that through excess they would learn moderation, he knew that the way for the present lay through the Venusberg, and that the race would assuredly not perish there as some individuals have, and as the Puritans fear we all shall unless we find a way round. Also, he no doubt foresaw the time when our children would be born on the other side of it, and so be spared the fiery purgation."

This sentiment occurs in the chapter devoted to a consideration of The Womanly Woman. Let us look at the phrases on the printed page of Candida that might be construed as bearing upon the above, or, rather, the result of the quoted passage.

Candida speaks to James, her husband, in Act II: —

Don't you understand? I mean, will he forgive me for not teaching him myself? For abandoning him to the bad woman for the sake of my goodness — my purity, as you call it? Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James, for if that went I should care very little for your sermons — mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day.

Here is one of the most audacious speeches in any modern play. It has been passed over by most English critics who saw in Candida merely an attempt to make a clergyman ridiculous, not realizing that the theme is profound and far-reaching, the question put being no more and no less than: Shall a married man expect his wife's love without working for it, without deserving it? Secure in his conviction that he was a model husband and a good Christian, the Rev. James Mavor Morell went his way smiling and lecturing. He had the "gift of gab," yet he was no humbug; indeed, a sincerer parson does not exist. He is quite as sincere as Pastor Manders, much broader in his views, and consequently not half so dull.

But he is, nevertheless, a bit of a bore, with his lack of humour and his grim earnestness. No doubt Shaw took his fling at that queer blending of Christianity and socialism, that Karl

Marx in a parson's collar which startled London twenty years ago in the person of the Christian socialist clergyman. He saw, too, being a man with a sense of character values and their use in violent contrast, that to the rhapsodic and poetic Eugene Marchbanks, Morell would prove a splendid foil. And so he does. Between this oddly opposed pair stands on her solid, sensible underpinnings the figure of Candida. Realist as is Mr. Shaw, he would scout the notion of his third act being accepted as a transcript from life. For two acts we are in plain earthly atmosphere; unusual things happen, though not impossible ones. In the last act Shaw, droll dramatist and acute observer of his fellow-man's foibles, disappears, only to return in the guise of Shaw the preacher.

And how he does throw a sermon at our heads! The play is arrested in its mid-ocean, and the shock throws us almost off our feet. Do not be deceived. That mock bidding for the hand of Candida, surely the craziest farce ever invented, is but this author's cunning manner of driving home his lesson. Are you worthy of your wife? Is the woman who swore to love and honour you ("obey" is not in the Shaw vocabulary, thanks to J. S. Mill) worthy of you? If your love is not mutual then better go your ways — you profane it! Is this startling? Is this novel? No and yes. The defence of love for love's sake, coming from the lips of a Shaw character, has a surprising effect, for no man is less concerned

with sex questions, no man has more openly depreciated the ascendancy of sex in art and literature. He would be the first to applaud eagerly Edmund Clarence Stedman's question apropos of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: Is there no other light in which to view the beloved one than as the future mother of our children? (I trust to a treacherous memory; the meaning is expressed, though not in Mr. Stedman's words.)

Therefore Candida is a large exposition of the doctrine that love should be free, — which is by no means the same thing as free love; that it should be a burden equally borne by both partners in the yoke; that happiness, instead of misery, would result if more women resembled Candida in candour. She cut James to the heart with the confounding of her shawl and personal purity; it was an astounding idea for a clergyman's ears. She proved to him later that she was right, that the hundredth solitary sinner is of more consequence than the ninety-nine reclaimed. Shaw, who is a Puritan by temperament, has, after his master, Ibsen, cracked with his slingstone many nice little glass houses wherein complacent men and women sit and sun their virtues in the full gaze of the world. One of his sharp and disconcerting theories is that woman, too, can go through the Venusberg and still reach the heights — a fact always denied by the egotistical man, who wishes to be the unique sinner so that he may receive the unique consolation. After a gay life, a sober

one; the reformed rake; Tannhäuser's return to an Elizabeth, who awaits him patiently; dear, sweet, virtuous Penelope! Shaw sees through this humbug of the masculine pose and turns the tables by making his Candida ride the horse of the dilemma man-fashion. Maeterlinck, in his Monna Vanna and Joyzelle, enforces the same truth — that love to be love should be free.

And the paradoxical part of it all is that Candida is a womanly woman. She is so domestic, so devoted, that the thin-skinned idealist Eugenie moans over her kitchen propensities. Shaw has said that "the ideal wife is one who does everything that the ideal husband likes, and nothing else," which is a neat and sardonic definition of the womanly woman's duty. Candida demands as her right her husband's trust in her love, not heavenly rewards, not the consciousness of her own purity, not bolts and bars will keep her from going from him if the hour strikes the end of her affection. All of which is immensely disconcerting to the orthodox of view, for it is the naked truth, set forth by a man who despises not orthodoxy, but those who profess it only to practise paganism. This Shaw is a terrible fellow; and the only way to get rid of a terrible fellow is not to take him seriously but to call him paradoxical, entertaining; to throw the sand of flattery in his eyes and incidentally blind criticism at the same time. But Bernard Shaw has always refused to be cajoled, and as to the sand or the mud of abuse

— well, he wears the very stout spectacles of common sense.

III

What does Mr. Shaw himself think of Candida? Perhaps if he could be persuaded to tell the truth, the vapourish misconceptions concerning her terrible "shawl" speech — about which I never deceived myself — might be dissipated. It was not long forthcoming — his answer to my question, an answer the publication of which was left to my discretion. It may shock some of his admirers, disconcert others, but at the same time it will clear the air of much cant; for there is the Candida cant as well as the anti Shaw cant. He wrote me: —

Don't ask me conundrums about that very immoral female, Candida. Observe the entry of W. Burgess: "You're the lady as hused to typewrite for him." "No." "Naaaow: *she* was younger." And therefore Candida sacked her. Prossy is a very highly selected young person indeed, devoted to Morell to the extent of helping in the kitchen but to him the merest pet rabbit, unable to get the slightest hold on him. Candida is as unscrupulous as Siegfried: Morell himself sees that "no law will bind her." She seduces Eugene just exactly as far as it is worth her while to seduce him. She is a woman without "character" in the conventional sense. Without brains and strength of mind she would be a wretched slattern or voluptuary. She is straight for natural reasons, not for conventional ethical ones. Nothing can be more

cold-bloodedly reasonable than her farewell to Eugene: "All very well, my lad; but I don't quite see myself at fifty with a husband of thirty-five." It is just this freedom from emotional slop, this unerring wisdom on the domestic plane, that makes her so completely mistress of the situation.

Then consider the poet. She makes a man of him finally by showing him his own strength — that David must do without poor Uriah's wife. And then she pitches in her picture of the home, the onions, and the tradesmen, and the cossetting of big baby Morell. The New York *hausfrau* thinks it a little paradise; but the poet rises up and says, "Out then, into the night with me" — Tristan's holy night. If this greasy fool's paradise is happiness, then I give it to you with both hands, "life is nobler than that." That is the "poet's secret." The young things in front weep to see the poor boy going out lonely and broken-hearted in the cold night to save the proprieties of New England Puritanism; but he is really a god going back to his heaven, proud, unspeakably contemptuous of the "happiness" he envied in the days of his blindness, clearly seeing that he has higher business on hand than Candida. She has a little quaint intuition of the completeness of his cure; she says, "he has learnt to do without happiness."

So here is Shaw on Shaw, Shaw dissecting Candida, Shaw at last letting in light on the mystery of the "poet's secret!" There may be grumbling among the faithful at this very illuminating and sensible exposition, I feel. So thinks Mr. Shaw, for he adds, "As I should certainly be lynched by the infuriated Candidamaniacs

if this view of the case were made known, I confide it to your discretion" — which by a liberal interpretation means, publish it and be hanged to you! But "Candidamaniacs!" Oh, the wicked wit of this man who can thus mock his flock! His *coda* is a neat summing up: "I tell it to you because it is an interesting sample of the way in which a scene, which should be conceived and written only by transcending the ordinary notion of the relations between the persons, nevertheless stirs the ordinary emotions to a very high degree, all the more because the language of the poet, to those who have not the clew to it, is mysterious and bewildering and therefore worshipful. I divined it myself before I found out the whole truth about it."

IV

Some day in the far future, let us hope, when the spirit of Bernard Shaw shall have been gathered to the gods, his popular vogue may be an established fact. Audiences may flock to sip wit, philosophy, and humour before the footlights of the Shaw theatre; but unless the assemblage be largely composed of Shaw *replicas*, of overmen and overwomen ("oversouls," not altogether in the Emersonian sense), it is difficult to picture any other variety listening to Man and Superman. For one thing, it is not a play to be played, though it may be read with delight bordering on despair. A deeper reason exists

for its hopelessness — it is such a violent attack on what might be called the Shaw superstructure, that his warmest enemies and chilliest admirers will wonder what it is all about. Even William Archer, one of the latter, confessed his disappointment.

Man and Superman — odious title — is Shaw's new attempt at a Wild Duck, formerly one of Ibsen's most puzzling productions. Shaw mocks Shaw as Ibsen sneered at Ibsen. This method of viewing the obverse of your own medal — George Meredith would say the back of the human slate — is certainly a revelation of mood-versatility, though a disquieting one to the man in the street. It does not seem to be playing fair in the game. Sometimes it is not. With Ibsen it was; he wished to have his fling at the Ibsenite, and he had it. Shaw-like one is tempted to exclaim, Aha! drums and trumpets again, even if the cart be re-painted. (*Vide* his earlier prefaces.)

The book is dedicated to Mr. Arthur Bingham Walkley, who once wrote of his friend, "Mr. Bernard Shaw fails as a dramatist because he is always trying to prove something." In the end it is Shaw the man who is more interesting than his plays, — all the characters are so many, — Shaw's winking at one through the printed dialogue.

In the pleasing and unpleasing plays, in the puritanical comedies, his "forewords" were full of meat served up with a Hibernian sauce, which

produced upon the mental palate the flavours of Swift, of Nietzsche, of Aristophanes, and of Shaw. This compound could not be slowly degustated, because the stuff was too hot. Velocity is one of Shaw's prime characteristics. Like a pianoforte *virtuoso* whose fingers work faster than his feelings, the Irishman is lost when he essays massive, sonorous *cantilena*. He is as emotional as his own typewriter, and this defect, which he parades as did the fox in the fable, has stood in the way of his writing a great play. He despises love, and therefore cannot appeal deeply to mankind.

In the present preface the old music is sounded, but brassier and shriller; the wires are wearing. It is addressed to Arthur Bingham Walkley, by all odds the most brilliant, erudite, and satisfying of English dramatic critics. Now the cruel thing about this preface is that in it the author tries to foist upon the critic of the London *Times* the penalty attached to writing such a play as Man and Superman. We all cannot be Drydens and write prefaces as great as poems; and Mr. Shaw might have left out either the play or the preface and spared the nerves of his friends. He started out to make a play on Don Juan, an old and ever youthful theme. He succeeded in turning out an amorphous monster, part dream, part sermon, that will haunt its creator as Frankenstein was haunted for the rest of his days Man and Superman is a nightmare.

To be impertinent is not necessarily an evidence of wisdom; nor does the dazzling epigram supply the missing note of humanity. But our author is above humanity. He would deal with the new man who is to succeed the present used-up specimen. We must freeze up, if needs be by artificial process, all the springs of natural instincts. Man must realize that in the inevitable duel of the sexes he will be worsted unless he recognizes that he is the pursued, not the pursuer. In the animal kingdom it is the male that is gorgeously bedizened for the purpose of attracting the feebler faculty of attention in the female. But in the human order the man is the cynosure of the woman. Her whole education and existence is an effort to win him — perhaps not for himself, nevertheless to win and wear him. This is biologically correct, though hardly gallant; and it is as old as Adam and Eve. Henry James once defined the situation succinctly, "It was much more the women . . . who were after the men than the men who were after the women; it was literally visible that the general attitude of one sex was that of the object pursued and defensive, apologetic and attenuating. . . ." (In the Cage.)

Mr. Shaw might have added that, unlike lightning, women strike twice in the same spot. Frivolity, however, is not in Mr. Shaw's present scheme of applied Unsociology.

As is the case with most reformers, he has harked back to the past for his future types.

His men and women, though they go down to the sea in motor cars, converse about Ibsen, Nietzsche, and Karl Marx, affect twentieth-century modes, are in reality as old as the hills and as savage as hillmen. They are only a trifle more self-conscious. The present play — let us call it one for the sake of the argument — deals with a precious "baggage" named Ann Whitefield. She is, in the words of Ibsen, "a mighty huntress of men." She is pert, very vulgar, quite uncivilized, quite ignorant of everyday feminine delicacies; in a word, the new woman, according to the gospel of Shaw. Her pursuit of a man, unavowed, bold, is the story of the play. She is hot-footed after a revolutionary socialist, John Tanner. Every word that springs or saunters from his lips, every movement of his muscular person, betrays the breed of Daredevil Dick, of all the revolutionaries in all the Shaw plays — the true breed of which Saint Bernard is himself the unique protagonist. Tanner is rich and believes himself an anarchist. He is mistaken. He is only a Fabianite with cash, a Fabianite who has lost the "shining face" of a neophyte and talks daggers and dynamite, though he uses them not. Ann has been left an orphan. She is a new Hedda Gabler, who knows what she wants, sees it, secures it; therefore she burns no dramatic "children," sends no man to a drunkard's doom; nor will she, one feels quite certain, deceive her husband. To secure him she attempts all the deception before she marries him,

and if she seldom succeeds with her white lies she nevertheless bags her game.

To supply these two pleasing persons with characters upon whom they may act and be reacted, Mr. Shaw has devised a middle-aged hypocrite, a whited sepulchre and man of the world, named Roebuck Ramsden; a sap-headed young man who dotes so much on Ann that he sacrifices his own happiness that she may be happy — or humbugs himself into that belief; a self-willed young lady, his sister Violet, who conceals her marriage with evil results to her reputation; a comical low-comedy chauffeur; several pale persons; a snobbish American youth of humble Irish parentage gilded by American wealth; some brigands, a dream Don Juan, and last, but not least, the Devil, who in this case is *not* a gentleman.

The first act is promising. Mr. Shaw's little paragraphs — they are intended as a prompt-book in miniature — are more amusing than his preface. We are deluded into the notion that a first-class comedy is at hand. There are all the materials ready. Ramsden, an "advanced" thinker of the antiquated Bradlaugh type, has been appointed co-executor, co-guardian with Tanner, a thinker of the latter-day type; that is, a man who has read Marx, Proudhon, Nietzsche, but not Max Stirner. The fair Ann, her mother and sister are the stakes of the game. Octavius, the sap-headed young man, is ready to sacrifice himself, and his sister shocks

all by not acknowledging the father of her unborn child. Here is potential stuff for a tragic comedy. But Mr. Shaw will not mould his material into viable shapes. He refuses to be an artist. He loathes art. And so he is punished by fate — his inspiration vanishes almost at the point of execution, and, except for a few fugitive flashes, never burns serenely or continuously.

One telling bit is when Tanner congratulates Violet (what an appropriate name!) on her delicate condition and is scorned by that young person, scorned and snubbed. What — she a wicked woman! No, she is but secretly wedded; in the fulness of time her husband will be revealed. Tanner sneaks away, feeling that not to women must man look for the emancipation of the sexes from conventional notions. There are long harangues on prevailing economic evils, social diseases — all the old Shaw grievances are paraded.

Act II is rather thin. In Act III, which recalls a Gilbertian farce, there are cockney brigands, a bandit corporation, limited, devoted to the robbing of automobiles that pass through Spain. The idea is not sufficiently novel to be funny. A lengthy parabasis, written in genuine Shavian, shows us hell, the Devil, Don Juan, and Anna of Mozartean fame. At least the talk here is as brilliant as is commonly supposed to prevail in the nether regions. *Inter alia*, we read that marriage is the most licentious

of human institutions — hence its popularity. Even the Devil is shocked. "The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error." "Beauty, purity, respectability, religion, art, patriotism, bravery, and the rest are nothing but words which I or any one else can turn inside out like a glove," continues this relentless rake and transformed preacher. Too true; but the seamy side as exhibited by Don Juan Shaw is not so convincing as in Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values. "They are mere words, useful for duping barbarians into adopting civilization, or the civilized poor into submitting to be robbed and enslaved."

Admitted, keen dissector of contemporary ills; but how about your play? In effect the author says: "To the devil with all art and plays, my play with the rest! What I wish to do is to tell you how to run the universe; and for this I will, if necessary, erect my pulpit in hell!"

After this what more can be said? The play peters out; there is talk, talk, talk. Ann calls the poetic temperament "the old maid's temperament"; the brigand chief sententiously remarks: "There are two tragedies in life: one is not to get your heart's desire; the other is to get it" — which sounds as if wrenched from a page of Chamfort or Rivarol; and Ann concludes with "Go on talking, Tanner, talking!" It is the epitaph of the piece, dear little misshapen, still-born comedy. Well may Mr.

Shaw write "universal laughter" at the end. Yet I am willing to wager that some critics will be in tears at this exhibition of perverse waste and clever impotency.

The Revolutionists' Handbook and Pocket Companion, which tops this extraordinary contribution, sociology masking as comedy, is its chiefest attraction. There, petrified into glistening nuggets, may be found Shaw philosophy, Shaw humour. There are maxims, too. "Do *not* unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same." This smacks of the inverted wisdom of the late James Whistler. Marriage, crime, punishment, the beating of children, title, honours, property, servants, religion, virtues, vices — everything of vital import to thinking men and women is regarded with the charmingly malevolent eye of Shaw. He exclaims: "Property, said Proudhon, is theft. This is the only perfect truism that has been uttered on the subject." Come, come, Bernard Shaw! Proudhon said it, but the speech was not his own property. You, who know your social classics so well, should have remembered Brissot's Philosophical Examination of Property and Theft, only published in 1780! You also say, "Beware the man whose God is in the skies," and "Every man over forty is a scoundrel." Tut, tut! Why not add — all girls over fifty should be drowned? It is just as logical. But can one condense the cosmos in a formula?

The general impression of the book causes us to believe there is a rift in the writer's lute; not in his mentality, but in his own beliefs, or scepticisms. Perhaps Shaw no longer pins his faith to Shaw. Ibsen asserts that after twenty years a truth that has outlived its usefulness is no longer *truth*, but the simulacrum of one. Shaw's truths may be decaying. We feel sure that if they be, he will be the first to detect the odour and warn away his public. Some years ago he printed a pamphlet against anarchy and anarchist, which was to be expected from a mild, frugivorous man. Now he seems to be wearying of the milk-white flag of socialism; and yet his revolutionary maxims are maxims for children in the time of teething. The world has moved since the Fabian society scowled at the British lion and tried to twist its tail with the dialectics of moderate socialism. To use Mr. Shaw's own pregnant remark, "Moderation is never applauded for its own sake"; and: "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches." Fabianism taught, taught moderation! Yet to-day the real thing is not Elisée Reclus, but Michael Bakounin; not Peter Kropotkin, but Sergei Netschajew; not Richard Wagner, but his friend, Roeckel, who was sent by him across the cannon-shattered barricades at Dresden in 1849 to fetch an ice to the thirsty composer. Wagner rang the alarm bells on this opera bouffe and escaped to Switzerland, Bakounin and Roeckel remained and went to prison!

Shaw is still ringing alarm bells, but somehow or other their music is missing and carries no message to his listeners. Is it possible that he regrets the anarchy that he has never had the courage to embrace and avow? A born anarchist, individualist, revolutionist, he has always gone in for half-hearted measures of reform. Never, like Bakounin, has he applied the torch, thrown the bomb; never, like Netschajew, has he dared to pen a catechism of destruction, a manual of nihilism so terrific that advanced Russian thinkers shudder if you mention its title. It is even rumoured that the Irish dramatist serves his parish as a meek citizen should — he will be writing poetry or melodrama next. His pessimism is temperamental, not philosophical, like that of most pessimists, as James Sully has pointed out. And instead of closely observing humanity, after the manner of all great dramatists, he has only closely studied Bernard Shaw.

"Regarded as a play, Man and Superman is, I repeat, primitive in invention and second rate in execution. The most disheartening thing about it is that it contains not one of those scenes of really tense dramatic quality which redeemed the squalor of Mrs. Warren's Profession, and made of Candida something very like a masterpiece." Thus William Archer.

V

Most modestly Mr. Shaw entitles a farce of his, the celebrated drama in two tableaux and

in blank verse, — The Admirable Bashville, or Constancy Unrewarded. It is nothing else but the story of Cashel Byron's Profession put into blank verse, because, as Mr. Shaw says, blank verse is so much easier to write than good prose. It is printed at the end of the second edition of the prize-fighting novel. As there has been a dramatization made — unauthorized — for a well-known American pugilist-actor, Mr. Shaw thought that he had better protect his English interests. Hence the parody for copyright purposes which was produced in London the summer of 1903 by the Stage Society at the Imperial Theatre. It is funny. It gibes at Shakespeare, at the modern drama, at Parliament, at social snobbery, at Shaw himself, and almost everything else within reach. The stage setting was a mockery of the Elizabethan stage, with two venerable beef-eaters in Tower costume, who hung up placards bearing the legend, "A Glade in Wiltstoken Park," etc. Ben Webster as Cashel Byron and James Hearn as the Zulu King carried off the honours. Aubrey Smith, made up as Mr. Shaw in the costume of a policeman with a brogue, caused merriment, especially at the close, when he informed his audience that the author had left the house. And so he had. He was standing at the corner when I accosted him. Our interview was brief. He warned me in grave accents and a twinkling Celtic eye never again to describe him as "benevolent." Half the beggars of London had winded the phrase and were pestering him

at his back gate. Mr. Shaw still looks as if a half-raw beefsteak and a mug of Bass would do him a world of good. But who can tell? He might then lose some of his effervescence — that quality of humour so happily described by Edmund Gosse when he spoke of the *vegetable* spirits of George Bernard Shaw.

The new play, John Bull's Other Island, was first played in London by the Stage Society last November. It is said — by Shaw's warmest enemies — to be witty, entertaining, and dramatically boneless. There is no alternative now for Mr. Shaw — he must visit America, lecture, and become rich. It is the logical conclusion of his impromptu career, for it was first in America that the Shaw books and plays were successful and appreciated; the plays largely because of the bold efforts of Arnold Daly and Winchell Smith, two young dramatic revolutionists. And Mr. Shaw may rediscover America for the Americans!

VII

MAXIM GORKY'S NACHTASYL

De profundis ad te clamavi!

After witnessing a performance of Maxim Gorky's Nachtasyl — The Night Refuge is a fair equivalent in English — one realizes, not without a shudder, that there are depths within depths, abysms beneath abysms, still unexplored by the dramatic adventurer. The late Emile Zola posed all his lifetime as the father of naturalism in literature; but he might have gone to school to learn the alphabet of his art at the knees of the young man from Nijni Novgorod, Maxim Gorky. That anarchist of letters has taught us lessons of the bitterest import, Gorky the Bitter One. We know now that Zola was only masquerading in the gorgeous rags of romanticism with a vocabulary borrowed from Châteaubriand, Victor Hugo, and Flaubert; we know, too, that despite the *argot* of L'Assommoir, the book is as romantic as a Bouguereau canvas — the formula is the same: highly glazed surfaces, smug sentiment, and pretty colouring. The difference is that while Zola painted low life like a born romantic, Bouguereau selected for his subjects the nymphs so dear to the lover

of classic anthologies. To the night of his unfortunate death Zola believed himself a naturalist, though his books never escape the taint of melodrama.

The naturalism of the Russians is in a different key. Gogol, the inimitable Gogol, wrote Dead Souls, and Russia had conquered the kingdom once ruled by Fielding. If Châteaubriand was the father of modern French prose, as Goethe asserted, from Gogol stemmed all the great modern Russians: Dostoïevsky, Turgenev, Stchendrin, Tolstoy, Gorky; and the last seems nearer the first than either Turgenev or Tolstoy. He is hardly ten years old artistically, yet his name is known from Siberia to the Sandwich Islands. He is read more in a day than Kipling is in a year, and, compared to Kipling, he is as flint to chalk, a man carved from the hardest granite.

A revolutionary, inasmuch as he deliberately disowns, in his most characteristic work, all the devices of literature, of rhetoric, of literary architecture, he is at his worst in prolonged narrative, such as Foma Gordyeeff. And when he philosophizes he is long-winded. It is in the short tale with a simple setting that Gorky knows how to stir us. A strip of sea beach, the sky a hot azure, the water green as grass, two or three men and women, and we are given a tragedy in miniature. Or the steppes, sullen and brown, stretch before us to the setting sun; a few tramps talk at random, night falls.

Misery huddles close. We have felt the very pulse-beat of life — and such lives! A wretched outcast, starved, wet as a dog in the rain — for he is but a dog in the rain — meets a woman as miserable and as degraded as himself. They manage to steal some mouldy bread, and sleep one night in a cask. It is but the recital of one night. They drift apart in the morning, never to meet again. Why should they care? Drab and monotonous, their soiled lives need be viewed but for a moment to surmise their future. Yet Gorky — for he is his own hero — contrives to sound undertones in this dark music that appeal. Instinctively he lays bare the souls of the men and women he dissects — souls as of muddy flame. A dreary sigh escapes their lips as they drag their poor carcases from place to place. Life has drugged them with sorrow. Why move at all? Why live at all? Why were they born? Why do they die? Existence is reduced to a few primary movements; eat, sleep; if vodka can be secured, then drink it to oblivion, for the sole blessing in this vale of tears is oblivion.

It may be seen that, compared to Gorky's rank, unsavoury, but sincere notation of facts, Thomas de Quincey's charming narrative of his youthful woes in Oxford Street — that "stony-hearted mother" — and his walks and talks with Anne, the noctambulist, is an idyll. Gorky transfers to his pages the odours of a starving, sweating humanity, its drunkenness, its explo-

sions of rage, guttural cries of joy, and its all too terrible animalism. We turn our heads the other way when his women curse and rave. Walt Whitman, said Moncure Conway, brought the slop pail into the drawing-room; but for Gorky there is no drawing-room. Life is only a dung heap.

For years I have searched for the last word in dramatic naturalism, and in Gorky's Nachtasyl I found it. I heard it first in Berlin at the Kleines Theatre, and later in Vienna at the Deutsches Volkstheatre. Gorky, himself a lycanthrope, pessimist, despiser of his fellow-men, has assembled in this almost indescribable and unspeakable mélange — for it is not a play — a set of men and women whose very lives smell to heaven; the setting recalls one of his stories, Men with Pasts. (It is in Orloff and his Wife.)

An utter absence of theatricalism and a naïveté in dramatic feeling proclaim Gorky a man of genius and also one quite ignorant of the fundamental rules of the theatre. His four acts might be compressed into two, or, better still, into one. Only the fatigue and gloom engendered would interfere with this scheme, for there is far too much talk, far too little movement. Gorky, like many uneducated men of power, loves to moralize, to discuss life and its meanings. He is at times veritably sophomoric in this respect. Long speeches are put into the mouths of his characters, who forthwith spout

the most dreary commonplaces about destiny, luck, birth, and death.

The strength of the play lies in its presentation of character. Characterization, with a slender thread of narrative, no effective "curtains," comprises the material of this vivid experiment. Nevertheless, it burns the memory because of its shocking candour and pity-breeding truths.

One is struck by a certain resemblance to Charles Dickens in all the novels of the Russians, Dostoïevsky and Gorky in particular. There are whole passages in Crime and Chastisement and Injury and Insult that might have been suggested by the English master of fiction. Gorky, like Gogol, loves to picture some poor wretch with a dominant passion, and then to place him in surroundings that will move the machinery of his being. And with all his hatred of life, of men, pity oozes from his pages, sometimes contemptuous, sometimes passionate, pity. The Night Refuge is a cellar with a kitchen, a few holes in the wall for sleeping purposes. Its counterpart exists in every great city. Thieves, prostitutes, men and women, the very dregs of life, pass their battered days and nights in these foul caves. Gorky confesses to having lived in such places while he wandered through some of the Russian towns. Anarchists are not, as is popularly supposed, born or bred in these pest alleys, whose inhabitants are too degraded, too worn out, to harbour plans for the overthrow of governments. The vermin that burrow in the

mud and darkness are not dangerously brave or endowed with destructive energies.

The keepers of the night asylum are a man and wife, a trifle better off than their lodgers in physique, for they are not drunkards. The husband is past fifty, an avaricious, snuffling, shuffling hypocrite, jealous of his young wife and brutal to the people he harbours. His wife is only twenty-six and hates her husband. She loves a young, good-looking thief who lives in the cellar, an aristocrat among his fellows, for he sleeps alone in a sort of cupboard, and only works at his "profession" when he needs money. He gets the hottest tea and the nicest morsels from the shrewish woman. Her voice, raucous and full of fury, is softened when she addresses her Wasjka. His companions know all about this affair, but are not jealous of him; they are too indifferent to everything but their own wants to care for God or man, devils or angels. They are over-tramps, beings for whom the moralities, major and minor, no longer have any meaning. The thief is tired of the woman, tired of his life amid stupid people, and has cast his eyes on Natascha, the sister of his mistress. The elder woman realizes it and trouble is brewing when the curtain goes up.

It is morning. A dull light filters from above on a mass of almost shapeless figures. One by one they stir. Yawns, half-stifled oaths, coughing, expectorations, noses noisily blown, whinings,

cries of pain, harsh laughter, and suppressed sobbing — the hideous symphony of life at its lowest social ebb. Again you feel like averting your head, for such is the force of suggestion that a noisome odour seems to emanate from the stage and creep languidly through the auditorium.

The other *dramatis personæ:* a policeman, uncle to the sisters; a locksmith with a dying wife — dying of consumption brought on by the prolonged beatings at the hands of her semi-insane husband; a street-walker — one who reads sentimental novels and speaks at intervals of a romance she had when younger; a huckstress, cynical, drunken, loud-mouthed; a cap-maker who never works; an actor who has forgotten his professional name, poisoned with alcohol; a man named Satin, a good-natured, degenerate scoundrel; a decayed baron, neurasthenic, and with a face that recalls one of Doré's sketches of a damned soul — lean, always biting his nails, stuttering, his eyes blazing with the infernal fires of vodka madness; an old man of venerable aspect, a pilgrim who happens in; his name is Luka and he is some sixty years of age. Then there is a young scapegrace shoemaker who plays the concertina and always describes himself as a free man, a man without cares, a man who would not accept wealth if offered him. A Tartar and several porters and members of the barefoot brigade make up this unattractive company.

How to weave a play from such unpromising material must have puzzled Gorky. Evidently he did not try, preferring the easier way of letting his people tell their own stories and reducing technical construction to a mere dropping of the curtain from time to time. In fact, there is far more dramatic intrigue in Tolstoy's Powers of Darkness, of which this piece is really a pendant. Gorky does not fear the naked truth as do many literary artists who have social position and reputations to maintain.

The collision of character which is essential to the production of drama is brought about somehow or other, the chief means employed being Luka the pilgrim. This old man, who is as loquacious as Polonius and almost as platitudinous, changes the ideas of every one he meets. He finds the thief hard and impenitent; he points out to him that in Siberia, over yonder, is a wide, free land, where every man may hew a way for himself. The good-looking scamp tells him that thief he was born, thief he must remain; that his father saw the inside of prisons; that if he goes to Siberia it will be as a convict, and not of his own volition. Yet the words of the stranger have sunk a shaft into his consciousness, and despite his mockery of the old man's belief he pauses and reflects—why not? Why not become a decent man, marry, beget children, and chuck the old life of crime and police espionage? He loves Natascha. He hates her sister, and in the best scene of the play he lays his case

clumsily but manfully before the girl. The crossroads of his life are arrived at — her decision will settle which turn he is to take.

Natascha is that mixture of good, bad, and indifferent in all of us, and is therefore a puzzle to audiences who like patterns made out of the whole cloth, without any dubious mixture of light and shade. She realizes that Wasjka has been her sister's lover; she has been beaten so that her face and shoulders are often black and blue by her jealous sister; she knows that her present life is a hell — yet she hesitates; Luka urges her. Wasjka pleads. Unluckily, the sister returns home earlier than expected and from a window overlooking the cellar up one short flight of stairs she overhears the entire conversation. Here is coincidence childishly introduced to unravel the simplest of dramatic knots. Yet it seems inevitable. The sister is an envious, prying woman, always spying upon her boarders. She may have hastened her devotions at church — like her husband, she is bigoted and hypocritical — and quietly sneaked in to see what mischief her disreputable crew of lodgers were making. Pictorially the scene is striking. It recalls any one of the numerous kitchen pieces of Teniers or Ostade, in which a stout wench is courted, while from some aperture above a jealous wife threateningly peers. At the crucial moment in the play the angry creature breaks out into a volley of abuse. A pretty state of affairs! Such goings-on in a respec-

table establishment if her back is turned for a half hour! A body can't go to church to pray for the sins of her neighbours without meddlesome old men entering unbidden a decent house and setting every one by the ears!

After she empties one vial of wrath upon Luka's head she uncorks another for her unfortunate sister's benefit. A lazy good-for-nothing, living on the bread of her relatives — a fine marriage she will make with a thief: a honeymoon in jail, perhaps! The husband puts in nasty remarks, and Wasjka loses his temper. There is a short, sharp interchange of blows, but the men are torn asunder. Hush! the police are always lurking near by, and not even the uncle, himself a member of the force, a bribetaker, gambler, and drunkard, could intervene where blood had been shed. But Wasjka's chance had passed. It does not return. Natascha, cowed, humbly goes upstairs to the kitchen, there to clean the samovar, and the aged Luka groans, for he knows what life is, with its queer eddies and whirlpools of chance.

He has comforted the dying wife of the locksmith, Anna by name, and, with all the ribaldry, drunkenness, and profanity around them, whispers in her ears consoling words. She has known naught but misery, starvation, cold, and blows her life long. Her brutal husband is presented as the type of the workman who is always preaching of the dignity of labour. *He* is a workman, he proudly asserts to the thief, and

files away at his locks while his wife lies gasping. We catch a strain of Tolstoy in the retort of the thief, who tells him that work alone doesn't make a man. Thick of apprehension, the huge dolt sits and files. When his wife begs for more air, he tells her to go to the yard — the place is already too cold. Then he moves over to her and offers her some bread. He even asks if she suffers. Finally, with the others, he departs for the tavern. As she listens to Luka's words, Wasjka enters and laughs them to scorn. Is there a God? The company, which has returned, discusses violently this question. Talk, talk, talk — the Russian tramp will talk all day if you give him a theme and a drink. If one believes in a God, interposes Luka, then God exists; if one does not, then there is no God. It is a neat metaphysical evasion, but the others are momentarily silenced. Wasjka has boasted that he fears neither life nor death. Anna quietly dies while the rest are gabbling, and instantly a hush pervades the sordid scene. Dead! What does that mean? A moment ago querulously begging for quiet — now quiet forever! The young criminal edges his way upstairs, his bragging spirit clean gone. Dead! Some one must run to the tavern and tell the husband. The police must be informed; the sooner the better for the man's sake. He might be suspected! The curtain falls on a moving spectacle.

Another case in which Luka interferes is that

of the old actor. We gather from this abject wreck's disconnected speeches that he has been a dramatic artist in his time; but, as he repeats, parrot-fashion, he "has poisoned his organism with alcohol." He picked up the phrase from the doctor at the poorhouse infirmary. This caricature of humanity, this wraith with a brilliant past, has drifted into the back waters of the night refuge and there awaits death. One gleam of light he is made to see before the end. Luka tells him of a city which contains a hospital for the cure of drunkenness. There must the actor go and there begin a new life. A new life! The words ravish his ears stunned by debauchery and wake a momentary vista of hope. Where is this city? Luka cannot tell. He has forgotten, but he will surely remember. The actor later relates to the cynical street-walker the good news. His brain stimulated by the intrusion of a new idea stirs to life. He quotes, misquotes, Shakespeare; recalls bits of Lear, and breaks down in recitation. The word, the word — what is it? Exalted he waves his arms wildly and rushes out to the haven of rest, the tavern. When the dead woman is surrounded by the speechless crowd, the old actor comes in, mounts a table, and declaims his speech. He has remembered. The effect is ghastly.

Luka has conversations with the baron. This odd bundle of bones lives on the young woman already mentioned. If he can't get vodka, he will drink drugs; these failing he will sit and

gnaw his nails as a mouse gnaws the wires of its cage, or he will sit cross-legged for hours on the top of the Russian stove and listen to story-telling. His catchword is "talk on"; anything for an anecdote. He mocks continually the woman who supports him. She is an inveterate sentimentalist, and every day tells a story about a student of noble birth who once threatened to shoot himself for love of her. But, as the baron sarcastically points out, the name of this imaginary hero is Gaston one day, another it is Raoul. He taunts the poor devil into despair and drunkenness. Luka expostulates. He touches the spring that sets working the young man's recollections of a happy and honourable past. He was the son of a wealthy, noble family. He had his coffee in bed in the morning — yes, it is true! He had servants, horses, a wife. Why was he born? No idea! Why did he marry? No idea! Why is he still living? No idea! Why will he die?

Then the woman has her revenge. It is her chance, and she takes it. She sneers at the baron's lies. He take his coffee in bed! Not he. Liar he is when he boasts of his birth. Vagabond! The episode is as ugly as if it happened under our eyes. His secret weakness exposed, the baron breaks into hysterical weeping, which presently modulates into fierce anger. Seizing a glass, he attempts to hurl it at her head. But the storm subsides, and soon they are all drinking and shouting. You feel as

if you had been viewing the scene from a hidden window, so realistic is the performance by the troupe of the Kleines Theatre.

The climax is attained in the third act. A row is precipitated during which the lodging-house keeper is killed. Who struck the blow? Loudly his widow denounces Wasjka. He is the murderer of her husband, he the thief who threatened so often the life of her good man. In the confusion the police rush in, Wasjka is manacled; but so is the woman, for Natascha bears witness that she overheard her sister plotting the death of her husband with her lover, Wasjka. The moment is as theatrically thrilling as you please; hate has the upper hand in Natascha's heart and her evidence sends the pair to prison. She disappears.

About this time you begin to suspect that the well-meaning Luka is a trouble-breeder. Every pie in which he has put his finger so far is spoiled. He, too, vanishes as noiselessly as he appeared. In Act IV what is left of the gang sits at the same old dingy table drinking and discussing, interminably discussing, the events of the past, and also Luka. He is branded as a liar, a bore, a kill-joy, a busybody, and one who causes trouble. What if he lies or tells the truth? What's the difference, anyhow? His truth caused murder, his lies did no one good, and so they sneer, sneer at the world, sneer at themselves, occasionally, Pilate-like, asking, what is truth? The Tartar prays in a corner and reads his Koran, the rest

yell out a drunken song, the shoemaker plays his concertina. The old actor, worse sot than ever, asks the Tartar to pray for him, goes out to the yard, and hangs himself. The baron discovers the swinging body and announces the fact to his comrades. One answers wrathfully, "So he must spoil our singing — the fool!" And with that the curtain drops, leaving you puzzled, disgusted, shocked, yet touched. Gorky has caught something of "the strange, irregular rhythm of life" in this piece, and you feel the vibration of truth in every line of the extremely plastic dialogue. That the stage has, or has not, any business with such spectacles never occurs to the spectator until out upon Berlin's broad avenue of trees pulsing with life.

The amateur of sensations, exquisite, morbid, or brutal, must feel after Nachtasyl that the bottomless pit has been almost plumbed. What further exploitation of woe, of crime, of humanity stripped of its adventitious social trappings, can be made? And this question is put by every generation without in the least stopping the fresh shaking up of the dramatic kaleidoscope. The Gorky play, even if it disgusts at times, at least arouses pity and terror, and thus, according to the classical formula, purges the minds of its spectators. Compared to the drama of lubricity manufactured in Paris and annually exported to America, this little study of a group of outcast men and women is a powerful moral lesson. That it is a play I do

not assert, nor could it be put on the boards in America without a storm of critical and public censure. Americans go to the theatre to be amused and not to have their nerves assaulted. Thackeray, in a memorable passage of Vanity Fair, refused to stir those depths of humanity where lurk all manners of evil monsters. Perhaps this refusal was for the great writer an artistic renunciation; perhaps he knew the British public. In our own happy, sun-smitten land, where poverty and vice abound not, where the tramp is only a creation of the comic journals — in America, if such a truth-teller as Gorky arose, we should fall upon him, neck and crop, gag him, and without bothering over the formality of a writ *de lunatico inquirendo*, clap the fellow behind the bars of a madhouse cell. It would serve him right. The ugly cancers of the social system should never be exposed, especially by a candid hand! In art, to tell truths of this kind does not alone shame the devil, but outrages the community. No wonder Emperor William does not grace such performances by his presence. No wonder Gorky is a suspect in Russia. He tells the truth, which in the twentieth century is more dangerous than hammering dynamite!

One detail I have forgotten. Old Luka the Pilgrim is asked by Wasjka Pepel where he purposes travelling after he leaves their haunt. To Little Russia, he says, adding that he has heard of a new faith being preached out there,

and he will see if there is anything in it. There might be — men search and search for better things. . . . If God will but give them patience, all will be well! Perhaps this new preacher has found the light! It is a touch unmistakably of Russia, where even the irreligious are not without faith. Gorky, with all his moral anarchy, is as superstitious as a *moujik*. He shakes his fists at the eternal stars and then makes the sign of the cross. It may be for that reason he wrote The Night Refuge.

De profundis ad te clamavi !

VIII

HERMANN SUDERMANN

The unfailing brilliancy of expression and abundant technical power of Hermann Sudermann have so seldom failed him in the lengthy list of his plays and novels that his admirers are too often oblivious to his main defect as an artist and thinker — a dualism of style and ideas. The Prussian playwright wishes to wear three heron feathers in his cap. Cosmopolitan as he is, he would fill his dramas with the incomparable psychologic content of Ibsen; he would be a painter of manners; he would emulate Sardou in his constructive genius. To have failed, and failed more than once, in his effort to precipitate these three qualities in his surprisingly bold and delicate wit, is not strange. And to have grazed so often the edge of triumphs, not popular but genuinely artistic, warrants one in placing Sudermann high in the ranks of German dramaturgists.

In a very favourable review written by Mr. W. S. Lilly of The Joy of Life, he ranks Sudermann among the great painters of manners, and, after reading Dame Care and The Cat's Bridge, we are tempted to agree with

the enthusiasm of the English critic. He thus sets down the qualities of a painter of manners: "Sense and sensibility, sagacity and suppleness, openness of mind and originality of thought, depth of feeling and delicacy of touch." Does Sudermann's art include all these things? We think not. Rather is he as a dramatist — the expert *Techniker*, the man of the theatre, impregnated by the dominant intellectual ideas of the hour, than a poet who from a haunting necessity gazes into his heart and then writes: Sudermann is too photographic; he too often wills his characters into a mould of his own, not of their own, making; he wills his atmosphere to blend with his theses, the reverse of Hauptmann's method. He is more cerebral than emotional, more of a philosopher than a dramatic psychologist. Above all, he is literary; he has the literary touch, the formal sense, the upgushing gift of verbal expression. Add to this order of talent a real feeling for dramatic *nuance*, and Sudermann's enigmatic warring opposites of temperament and action seem remarkable.

In 1889, miraculous year of modern artistic Germany, Sudermann's dramatic début in Honour was more of a nine days' wonder than Hauptmann's Before Sunrise. The surety of touch, the easy mastery of theatric effects, the violent contrasts, and the sparkling dialogue transformed Sudermann's cometary career into a fixed star of the first magnitude. To-day this first play appears banal enough. Time has per-

mitted us to see it in completer historic perspective. Ibsen's influence in the posing of the moral conflict is speedily recognized, just as Count Von Trast may be traced to those *raisonneurs* so dear to the younger Dumas, those human machines spouting logic and arranging the dénouement like the god behind the cloud. One inevitably recalls the relation of Björnsen to Ibsen in the present position of Sudermann and Hauptmann.

Yet it is easy to admire Honour. It contains, notably in the two acts of the "hinter haus," real strokes of observation and profound knowledge of human nature. The elder Heinecke, rapacious rascal, is a father lost to all sense of shame, for he closes his eyes to his daughter's behaviour. This same old scamp is both true and amusing. Nor is his wife depicted with less unwavering fidelity. The motive of Honour is not alone the ironic contrast of real and conventional ideals of honour — it shoots a bolt toward Nietzsche's land where good and evil blend in one hazy hue. Sudermann, here and in nearly all his later pieces, challenges the moral law — Ibsen's loftiest heron feather — and if any appreciable theory of conduct is to be deduced from his works, it is that the moral law must submit to the variations of time and place, even though its infraction spells sin, even though the individual in his thirst for self-seeking smashes the slate of morality and perishes in the attempt.

This battle of good and evil Sudermann dwells upon, often to the confusion of moral

values, often to the tarnishing of his art. And in his endeavour to hold the dramatic scales in strict equipoise, to intrude no personal judgments, he leaves his audiences in blank bewilderment. Better the rankest affirmations than the blandest negatives. Yes counts far more than No in the theatre, and Sudermann is happier when he is violently partisan. His contemporary, Hauptmann, shows us the shipwreck of souls in whom the spiritual stress preponderates. Sudermann, except in rare instances, sticks closer to the social scale and its problems; and when he does he is at his best, for it cannot be said that The Three Heron Feathers, written under the spur of The Sunken Bell, betrays a mastery or even a familiarity with those shadowy recesses wherein action is a *becoming*, where the soul blossoms from a shapeless mass into volitional consciousness. Sudermann's art is more external; it concerns itself with the How rather than with the Why, and one feels that storm and fury were deliberate engraftments, not the power which works from within to the outer world.

There is character drawing of an unexceptional kind in Honour. Robert Heinecke returns from foreign lands to find his family degraded, his sister trading on her beauty, his father and mother accepting bounty from the mansion house, the employers of the honourable son. The maze in which he is caught is constructed with infinite skill; the expository act

is the best. There is not much mystery — we seem here to be in the clear atmosphere of the French dramaturgists, Augier and Dumas; while the finale is rather flat, we look for a suicide or a scandal of some sort. The author keeps himself steady in the saddle of realism. This ending is lifelike, inasmuch as the hero goes away with Graf Trast, who literally reasons him out of his dangerous mood. We feel that all the rest do not count, not the ignoble Kurt and his snobbish friends, his philistine parents; not the Heineckes with their vulgar avarice, their Zola-istic squalor. The romance is conventional. In fact, so cleverly did Sudermann mingle the new and old in the opposing currents of dramatic art that his play was instantly a success.

Accused of this ambition to drive two horses, the dramatist threw down as a gauge to criticism, Sodom (1891). It was not a great play, because it lacked logic, balance, truthfulness. A distorted picture of artistic degeneracy, its satire on certain circles in Berlin caused a furore; but the piece had not the elements of sincerity. Technically it revealed the mastery of almost hopeless material, and while one's æsthetic sense and the fitness of things are hopelessly upset, the cunning hand of the prestidigitator is everywhere present. There are some episodes that stir, notably the scenes between father and son; but the grimness and sordidness are too much for the nerves.

Magda (1893) struck a new note. Many

believe it to be Sudermann at his best. Thus far he has not surpassed it in unity of atmosphere and dissection of motives. That the *morale* may be all wrong is not to the point. Again we see Ibsen's mighty shadow in the revolt of the new against the old; daughter and father posed antagonistically with the figure of the pastor, one of the German author's better creations, as a mediating principle.

One of many reasons that the Magda of Sudermann is a remarkable play is the critical controversy over its interpretation. Each one of us reveals his temperamental bias in the upholding of Bernhardt's or Duse's or Modjeska's respective readings. And which one of the three artists has exhausted the possibilities of Magda's many-sided character? On this point Herr Sudermann is distressingly discreet, although he has a preference for Duse, as is well known to a few of his intimates. The reason is simple. Duse presents more phases of the character, exhibits more facets of this curious dramatic gem, and by her excellences, and not her limitations, we must judge her performance.

We have seen a dozen Magdas: English, French, German, Italian, Belgian, Jewish, and Scandinavian. Fanatical admirers of Bernhardt claim preëminence for her in the part, certain sides of which are child's play for her accomplished virtuosity. But the critic who knows Sudermann's Magda also knows that the very brilliancy of the glorious French actress throws

the picture into too high relief; there are no middle tints in Sarah's embodiment. It recalls the playing of an overmasteringly brilliant pianist, one who rolls over the keyboard like a destructive avalanche. The human note, the sobbing, undulating quality of a violoncello whose tone flashes fire, is missing. Little doubt that Bernhardt gives us certain moods of Magda in a transcendental manner. She is the supreme artist of all in the exposition of tragic *bravura*. Yet she is not Sudermann's Magda. This is so well known as to be a critical commonplace.

Mrs. Campbell's Magda is above the ordinary. Modjeska's powers were on the wane when she appeared in the play; but we cannot forget the native sweetness and true Polish *žal* with which she suffused the character. Supple, poetic, charming, she was, and despite all, lacked much of Magda's complexity. Does Duse entirely fulfil all the requirements of the rôle?

We do not know. We only feel that in mood-versatility she outstrips all others we have seen, and if she has not seen farthest into the soul of the opera singer, she has viewed it from more sides than her contemporaries. Hence her interpretation is more various and, it being Duse, is more wonderful in the technical sense in the revelation of an effortless art.

She is natural, never photographic. Photography arrests motion; Duse is ever in modulation. Rather, if you will have pictorial analogues, might her Magda be compared to a Richard

Earlom or a Valentine Green mezzotint, wherein the luminous shadows and faint spiritual overtones are acidly mellow. And who shall forget the manner of her throat as it trilled with rage when to her Von Keller makes his perfectly honourable and perfectly abominable offer! We have dwelt so much upon the admirable reticences of this artist, upon her "tact of omission," we really forget that she never stops acting or living her part for a moment. She continually evokes musical imagery, for the exquisite and harmonious interrelations of every movement, every word, unroll before us like great, solemn music.

Magda will probably outlive The Joy of Life, as it has already outlived the dramatist's Honour. The theme of the first is based on more fundamental facts than the others — the clash of will and affection. If all human families were loving, if father never opposed daughter or son flouted mother, then such a play as Magda never would have been written. But, alas! the newspapers prove that family life is not always celestial, indeed, that it is often bestial. But the Parson Tickletexts never acknowledge this.

There is no lesson in Magda; the ending is not a sermon — unless you wish it to prove that contradicting apoplectic fathers is a fatal proceeding. Magda is an individualist. She is selfish. This trait she shares with the mass of mankind. Her "I am I" is neither a procla-

mation nor a challenge to the world. It is the simple confession of a woman who knows herself, her weaknesses, her errors, who has battled and wrested from life a little, passing triumph, the stability of which she doubts.

"We must sin if we wish to grow. To become greater than our sins is worth more than all the purity you preach." Is this immoral? We hasten to quote a sentence from John Milton's Areopagitica, the magnificent music of which fascinated the ear of Robert Louis Stevenson, quite apart from its significant wisdom.

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust or heat." Poor Magda's virtue was certainly not cloistered. She ran for fame's garland in all the dust and heat of the artistic arena. She won, she lost. The bigot discerns in Magda an abandoned creature; the men and women who see life from all sides and know the fallibility of the flesh are apt to forgive her shortcomings.

"The ghost of a linen decency yet haunts us." She must have had a detestable disposition. Fancy what a spoilt opera singer with sore tonsils can be on a rainy day, especially when she reads the name of her dearest foe "substituting" on the bill. Then drop her in the sleepy old town of her nativity, where a harsh, opinionated father would worm from her every detail of her dubious past.

Sudermann has done this with the result — a lifelike play, in which nothing is demonstrated except the unalterable stupidity of things in general and the naked fact that "I am I" is the only motto, whether secret or published, of every human crawling 'twixt earth and sky. In the pastor Sudermann attempts to paint the altruist in action. It is hardly a convincing piece of portraiture. Your true altruist is bounded by Tolstoy on the north, by Howells on the west, by Francis of Assisi on the south, and on the east by Buddha. Outside of book covers the person exists not.

The Battle of the Butterflies (1894) was seen in New York at Conried's Irving Place Theatre. It is comedy of a skin-deep variety, entertaining! And here's an end to it. Happiness in a Corner is deeper in sentiment. It has the Ibsen touch with a pathos foreign to the Norwegian. Inspector Orb is of Ibsen, so is Pastor Weidemann, and the others — Bettina, Räcknitz, Elizabeth, and Helena — are alive and suffer and joy. There is vitality in this work. Also is there force and consummate cleverness in the three one-act plays grouped under the title Morituri (1896). Avowedly devoted to the theme of death they are all three illustrative of the dramatist's feeling for the right phrase, the only right situation. Teja, Fritzchen, and The Eternal Masculine show us in three widely differing modes how, as in life, we miss the happiness near at hand while longing for the ideal —

a theme dealt with more broadly in The Three Heron Feathers.

John the Baptist (1898), like Paul Heyse's Mary Magdalen, was the occasion of a scandal in Berlin, because the censor forbade its performance on religious grounds, though Otto Ludwig's Maccabees and Hebbel's Judith are stock pieces. As a drama it is weak, for the vacillating hero wearies us to distraction, notwithstanding the poetic charm of the prologue. If the Christ had been boldly dramatized, as was evidently the playwright's purpose, the outcome, no matter how shattering to pious nerves, would have been better artistically. But this vague dreamer, pessimistic, halting, irresolute, what can we make of him across the footlights, and for once Sudermann's technical ability failed him.

The Three Heron Feathers (1899) is an attempt to meet Hauptmann on equal terms. It lacks coherence, despite the occasional lift of its verse — Sudermann fancied that he had forsworn the prose of the realistic drama forever — while the lofty moral ideal, unduly insisted upon, soon becomes a thorn in the flesh. No one is alive but the trusty Lorbuss, the Prince being a theory set in action. The next play, St. John's Fire (1900), we confess to having read with more pleasure than seeing it enacted. It goes up in the air soon after the curtain rises on Act III, though the story is a capital one for dramatic purposes. It would

seem that Sudermann was again attacked by his doubting mania. He has contrived the atmosphere of romance, the pagan fire of St. John, the mystery of night, the passion of Georg and Marikke; but either his courage failed him, or else beset by some idea of resignation he spoilt his development and conclusion, and we leave the theatre dissatisfied, not with that spiritual dissatisfaction which Ibsen plants, a rankling sore in one's heart, but the kind that grows into resentment against the dramatist, for Marikke is a girl of whom Thomas Hardy would have been proud. And then there is a muddle of symbolism and heredity, — Sudermann endeavouring to scoop up in his too comprehensive net the floating ideas of the hour. Georg von Hartwig's sudden lapse into a selfish citizen we can never forgive.

Of the criticism of masterpieces there is no end. Take Sudermann's The Joy of Life as an example. (Why such an Ibsen-like title for Es Lebe das Leben?) Obsessed by subject and subject-matter only, many of us turn a blind side to the real qualities that make up an excellent play. Now this harping on the theme of a drama — whether pleasant, unpleasant, dull, brilliant, or truthful — is eminently amateurish. It is rather the function of the manager; it affects his box-office, and, as he is not in business for art, he cherishes that brave little place above all else. But a critic is supposed to wear an open mind, to accept a subject

without looking the gift poet in the mouth, and also to judge how near the dramatist reaches the goal of his own ideal — not the critic's. That we do not do so is to be pitied. It is because of this that so many wonderful plays never see the light, or else are botched at their birth.

This persistent avoidance of the dramatist's viewpoint, this refusal to enter into sympathetic complicity with him, leads to sad conclusions. If you decide violently that a play has no right to exist because it exhibits a situation or character abhorrent to your notions, in what a predicament is the dramatist! It recalls the story told by George Saintsbury about the man who was shown Flameng's beautiful etching of Herrera's Child with the Guitar. "But I don't like babies," said the man, unconsciously illustrating uncatholicity in criticism. The subject did not appeal to him, therefore its truthful art could go hang.

Too great an artist to preach a moral, Sudermann nevertheless bestows the justice demanded by destiny upon the luckless Beata, Countess of Michael von Kellinghausen. The Joy of Life is next to Magda technically one of Sudermann's biggest achievements.

To present such a trite theme with new harmonies is a triumph. The tragic quality of the piece in an atmosphere bordering on the aristocratic commonplace is not the least of its excellences. We know that life is daily, that great art is rare, that the average sensual man

prefers a variety show to a problem play; yet we are not abashed or downcast. The cant that clusters about cults, theatric or artistic, should not close our ears to the psychologic power and the message — if you will have the word — of this Sudermann play. If his Beata, — Ibsen has a Beata in Rosmersholm and D'Annunzio one in his La Gioconda — was a sorely beset woman, if she felt too much, thought too much, — one suspects her of poring over Nietzsche and hearing much Wagner; witness that allusion to Hans Sachs's quotation from Tristan, — yet is she not a fascinating soul? Are there to be no semitones in character? Must women be paragons and men perfect for inclusion in a play? If this be so, then all the art of the Elizabethans is false, their magnificent freedom and their wit a beacon of warning to pure-minded playwriters. And, pray, out of what material shall the dramatist weave his pattern of good and evil?

But had Sudermann transposed his Beata to the fourteenth century, had he dowered her with mediæval speech and the name of Beatrice, had he surrounded her with lovers in tin-plate armour, our shrinking natures might not have hied to cover. The pathos of distance would have softened the ugly truths of the modern drawing-room. The Joy of Life is a capital play. There is much conventionality displayed in the minor characters; only Beata and Richard are really original. And the use

of the divorce debate as a symbol reveals the real weakness of the play, though structurally it has some striking virtues. The small part of Meixner, the theological student turned social-democrat, had *vraisemblance*. It suggests the character of Krogstad in A Doll's House. That tiresome exhorter, Count Trast, in Sudermann's Honour, is luckily not duplicated. And we doubt not that the absence of explicatory comment by the author is disheartening to a public which likes all the questions raised answered at the close, after the manner of a Mother Goose morality. Neither D'Annunzio nor Sudermann is a preacher. As in the ghastly illumination of a lightning flash, souls hallucinated by love, terror, pity, despair, are seen struggling in the black gulf of night. And then all becomes abysmal darkness. There are the eternal verities, the inevitable compensations in this play. The application of the moral is left to the listener, who is given the choice of echoing or not echoing the immortal exclamation of Mr. Saintsbury's unknown, "But I don't like babies!"

In Storm-Brother Socrates, Sudermann places his scene in a small East Prussian town, possibly Matizken, where he was born in 1857. The schoolmaster, the grocer, the Jewish rabbi, the tax-collector, and the dentist are the chief characters of this satiric comedy. A lot of old cronies, men who went through the stirring times of '48, form a revolutionary guild, calling themselves "The Brotherhood of the Storm." Harm-

less enough, they still declaim against Bismarck — the time of action is twenty years ago — and talk of their warlike exploits. As the dramatist is preëminently a painter of manners, many of his portraits are masterly. The dentist, Hartmayer, is a hater of tyranny and an idealist. He has assumed the name of Socrates, his companions selecting such stirring pseudonyms as Catiline, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, and Poniatowski. This dentist's son Fritz has adopted the same profession; and being called to attend a reigning prince's dog for toothache, he is denounced by his anti-imperialist of a father. But Fritz is a socialist and has no prejudices on the subject of canine gums. Another brother, an impudent lad, is a conservative. When the archives of the Bund fall into the hands of the local magistrate, the old man is thoroughly miserable. His associates fly and he, expecting arrest, is decorated for the services of his son in saving an aristocratic dog's teeth! He accepts, and the curtain falls on a rather discursive, ill-natured comedy. However, Sudermann's virtuosity has plenty of opportunity for display.

The minor characters are well sketched. The waitress, Ida, is an exceedingly vital figure, as is the innkeeper. The dialogue is Sudermann almost at his best, — witty, sarcastic, ironical, tersely vigorous, and true to life. Like Daudet and Flaubert, Sudermann loves to prick the bloated German bourgeois. There is a little Hebrew,

named, from sheer cruelty, Siegfried Markuse. His description of his freshman visits to a *Corps-Kneipe* at the Königsberg University is a fair example of the playwright's powers of unerring observation.

"Just as soon as I gave my name," relates Siegfried, "the man across the table began to crack jokes on Jews. I play the naïve and keep the game going. Then you should have heard them snicker. I see plainly enough that they are laughing at me, but I clench my teeth and say to myself, 'You are going to *compel* me to respect your superior intellect. . . .' I talked about everything, — old idealism and modern gaiters; Germany's inalienable national rights and the swellest way of training poodles; the unimportance of Hegel's conception of divinity and the importance of a good pug dog. I quoted Plato, Schopenhauer, and the latest sharper. Everybody looked at me with mouth agape, and I thought I had them just where I wanted them when my friend Hartmayer came and whispered that he was commissioned to give me a hint that this was no place for my colossal jaw, and that it would be better if I stayed away next time. Outside I shook my fist and swore: 'If you *won't* have us as friends, you *will* have us as enemies! Then we shall see who comes out on top.'"

Mr. Lilly sees in Sudermann an affinity with Euripides, which may mean that he is a painter of a society in its decadence. His affinities as pointed out seem to be Parisian; at least he is

Parisian in his gift of observation and style, German as is his power of reasoning. He is unmoral, following the *tendenz* of his time, but not so completely as D' Annunzio, who is satisfied with sheer shapes of beauty. With Sudermann it is, first, technical prowess, secondly, social satire, and he is always brilliant if not always satisfying.

IX

PRINCESS MATHILDE'S PLAY

À. S. A. I. Madame la princesse Mathilde,
sonnet improvisé
sur des rimes données sur un sujet choisi

LA VERANDAH

Sous cette verandah, peinte en vert d'espérance,
On arrive et l'on part avec un souvenir
Si doux, qu'on y voudrait aussitôt revenir
Sous les fleurs des tropiques et les plantes de France.

Une main de déesse y guérit la souffrance,
Au mérite modeste elle ouvre l'avenir.
Elle sait couronner comme elle sait punir.
Pour le génie elle est pleine de déférence.

Devant elle enhardi, l'esprit prime-sautier,
Ainsi qu'Euphorion dansant sur la prairie,
Peut, entre terre et ciel, se montrer tout entier.

Pour que son œil pétille et que sa lèvre rie
Et que de toute humeur sa lèvre soit guérie,
Il suffit d'un bon mot de son bouffon Gautier.

—THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

THE late Princess Mathilde Bonaparte meant many things to many people. Her ancestry, her marriage to Prince Demidoff, her political power at the Tuileries, her sympathetic patronage of artistic folk, her personal beauty, love

affairs, and feminine caprices — all these serve the world as pleasing material for anecdotes. The Princess was fond of the theatre, and fonder still of a *première* when the play was written by one of her intimate circle. She was surrounded by a distinguished group of poets, painters, dramatists, novelists, and diplomats. De Morny called her "the man of the family." She was good to gaze upon, and she had intellect. After the death of Sainte-Beuve, the publication of her correspondence with that celebrated critic gave us a portrait of his friend. It occurs in Lettres de la Princesse : —

" The Princess has a high, noble forehead, and her light golden hair, leaving uncovered on each side broad, pure temples, is bound in wavy masses on the full, finely shaped neck. Her eyes, which are well set, are expressive rather than large, gleam with the affection of the thought of the moment, and are not of those which can either feign or conceal. The whole face indicates nobleness and dignity, and, as soon as it lights up, grace united to power, frankness, and goodness; sometimes, also, it expresses fire and ardour. The head, so finely poised and carried with such dignity, rises from a dazzling and magnificent bust, and is joined to shoulders of statuesque smoothness and perfection."

That description should cover a multitude of indiscretions, such as the publication of the letters. She had already given Taine his *congé* for his criticism of Napoleon in the *Revue des*

Deux Mondes. She was the daughter of Jerome and Caroline of Württemberg and was as proud as Napoleon. She never forgave an offence, and Taine's conception of the First Consul as a superior bandit closed her doors upon him.

She stood with forced equanimity the first two of his masterly studies; at the third she exclaimed with true feminine *finesse* of cruelty: —

"Ah, I know what I shall do! I owe Mme. Taine a call. I shall leave my card with P. P. C., which will mean that I take leave of him forever. I cannot allow a friend to attack violently the head of my family, the man without whom I should perhaps be nothing but a little orange-vender on the bridge at Ajaccio." She put her threat into execution. Taine, shocked by the rupture, called on Renan. After hearing the tale without any comment but a sweet, ironical smile, Renan answered: —

"*Cher ami*, I have quarrelled with a much greater lady than the Princess Mathilde."

"With whom, then?"

"The Church," answered Renan, dryly.

Mathilde did not respect rank more than genius. She set her face against the free and easy democratic manners, and because of this disliked the American invasion — few of our countrymen crossed her doors. One night Edmond About was invited to her house, and during the trying moments before dinner he amused her with his wit. Suddenly the Count Nieuwerkerke appeared. "Go away," cried

the novelist, "and let us be alone, you jealous fellow." The Princess arose, rang, and instructed the servant: "Conduct M. About to his carriage. He is not dining here to-night." And the man of the Broken Ear went away, his temper much ruffled.

In 1847 the Princess settled in Paris permanently. She had been divorced from the handsome, profligate Demidoff, and her allowance, a big one, had been given her by a decree from the Czar. Over Napoleon III she wielded great influence. Of him the De Goncourts said, "The Emperor would be an excellent somnambulist if only he had intervals of lucidity;" while Flaubert declared him to be clever because, knowing his ignorance, he had the wisdom to hold his tongue. The Empress Eugénie was always jealous of Mathilde's power with her imperial cousin. That she was at the latter's funeral is an illustration of life's topsy-turvy tricks. Eugénie was jealous also of the Castiglione, and the De Goncourts do not fail to register Constance's spiritual *mot* about the Emperor.

"If I had only resisted, to-day I should have been an Empress!"

This recalls the delightful answer made by Alfred de Musset to a famous actress of the Théâtre Français — is it necessary to give the name? Once the lady had said: —

"Monsieur de Musset, I hear you have boasted of being my lover." "I beg your

pardon," answered the friend of Rachel and George Sand; "I have always boasted to the contrary."

The rupture of Mathilde Bonaparte and Sainte-Beuve took place in 1869. The brothers De Goncourt heard its details from the Princess. They found her still trembling from the stormy interview. "I shall never see him again — never again! I, who fell out with the Empress on his account! . . . He has gone over to the *Temps*, our personal enemies! Ah! I said to him, 'Monsieur Sainte-Beuve, listen! I am sorry you did not die last year, for I should then have mourned a friend.'"

She must have been difficult at times. She had a good opinion of her birth, wealth, position, and beauty. "Yes, I had a peculiar and most extraordinary complexion. I remember in Switzerland, when I was fourteen, they put a Bengal rose leaf on my cheek, and were unable to distinguish between the two."

On one occasion, when Edmond de Goncourt was openly rude to her at her Château Saint-Gratien, she, with her guests, sat stupefied. Later he apologized, tears in his eyes — he was a gallant, handsome gentleman — and he relates most ingenuously, "Suddenly she put her arms around me and kissed me on each cheek, saying, 'Of course I forgive you — you know how truly attached I am to you; I also, of late, have felt quite nervous and upset.'"

It was this passage that caused Henry James

to shiver; not because of the fact, but the lack of tact. The De Goncourts were taken up by the Princess in 1862. Jules, the younger brother, died in 1870, literally killed by his devotion to literary art. The chiselling of the De Goncourt phrases was deadly to brain and body. It is little wonder that their novels, one after the other, until Germinie Lacerteux appeared, should have been indifferently received. As Alphonse Daudet, ever receptive and tender in his judgments of original work, wrote: "Novels such as had never been seen before; novels that were neither moulded upon Balzac nor diluted from George Sand, but novels made up of pictures, . . . with plot scarcely indicated, and great blanks between the chapters; real break-neck ditches for the bourgeois reader. To this add an entirely new style, full of surprises — a style from which all conventionality is banished, and which, by a studied originality of phrase and image, forbids any commonplace in the thought; and then the bewildering boldness, the perpetual uncoupling of words accustomed to march together like oxen dragging a plough, the earnest care in selection, the horror of saying all and anything; considering this, how can one be astonished that the De Goncourts were not immediately greeted by the applause of the common herd?"

The mystery of it is, Why should the De Goncourts have cared for the applause of that same bourgeois public they so despised, reviled, and

held up to mockery in their books? Gautier, Zola, Daudet, had to work like galley slaves for a living; the two brothers and Flaubert were rich, as riches go with literary men; why, then, did they care whether they were popular or not? Was it because they were human, notwithstanding their theories of impassibility, perfection, and art for art's sake?

The Château Saint-Gratien was the Princess Mathilde's country home until her death. There she entertained, as entertained George Sand at Nohant, all her friends. Until his death, in 1896, Edmond de Goncourt was her privileged visitor. The work of the two brothers in eighteenth-century chronicles amused and interested her, especially their minute histories of such actresses as Du Barry, Sophie Arnold; and, earlier, great women like Mme. de Pompadour, the Duchess of Châteauroux; great painters, Watteau, Boucher, Latour, Greuze, Lancret, Fragonard; and stage favourites such as Mesdames Saint Huberty, Clairon, and La Guimard.

The brothers introduced Japanese art into France. They were amateurs of the exquisite. Their house at Auteuil was truly "la maison d'un artiste au XIX siècle." And consider the labour, acute, agonizing, and enormous, involved in the writing and production of their novels: Germinie, Madame Gervaisais, Renée Mauperin, Manette Salomon (which was the first novel of studio life, excepting Fromentin's Domenique, in France, and one that influenced Zola greatly in his

L'Œuvre and De Maupassant in his Strong as Death), Charles Demailly — a wonderful study of journalism in Paris, a true continuation of Balzac's Lucien Rubempré; Sœur Philomène; and, written by Edmond after the death of Jules, La Fille Elisa, Les Frères Zemganno, La Faustin, and Chérie. In addition, there are the nine volumes of the journal, a study of Gavarni, the master caricaturist; vaudevilles, pantomimes, letters, portraits, several plays, histories, études, an early novel En 18—, and miscellany amounting in all to over forty volumes. Yet this fraternal pair, because of their wealth and birth, are still contemptuously alluded to as "amateurs." Yes, amateurs, indeed, in the fullest sense of a misinterpreted word, amateurs of beautiful sensations, amateurs in their devotion to an ideal hopeless of attainment, amateurs who might well be patterned after in this age of hasty production, vulgar appeal to the sentimental, to the cheap and obvious. Aristocrats were the De Goncourts, yet their white fingers never faltered when they held the burin and engraved in indelible letters that first great naturalistic novel, Germinie Lacerteux, the tale of an unhappy servant.

Even their friend De Monselet pronounced it "sculptured slime," and, to the curiously inclined, interesting are the *critiques* of Brunetière; of Barbey D'Aurevilley — who hacked away at everybody on general principles; of Renée Doumic, who always follows the lead of Bru-

netière; of Maurice Spronck, who declared that the brothers were victims of a malady known to psycho-physiologists as *Audition colorée*. But there were fairer critics. The studies of Zola, Daudet, Henri Ceard, Paul Bourget, Henry James, Émile Hennequin, the friendly words of Turgenev, that gentle Russian giant, the valuable suggestions of Flaubert — these were balm to the sensitive nature of Edmond de Goncourt. He lived to head a school — hitherto rather sterile, it must be confessed — and before his death he dowered an academy. (Ah, if all French literary men had but a moiety of Daudet's humour in the matter of academies!)

But the contribution of the De Goncourts to the novel will be lasting. They have one celebrated disciple, Karl Joris Huysmans, who began under their influence and has traced for himself over the "great highway so deeply dug out by Zola . . . a parallel path in the air by which we may reach the Beyond and Afterward, to achieve thus, in one word, a spiritualistic naturalism." In the last analysis Huysmans is an artistic stepson of the epileptic Dostoïevsky, greatest of all psychologists; and while he may have forgotten it, his first artistic springboard was the De Goncourts.

What Henrietta Maréchal accomplished despite its failure, was in the dialogue — modern, picturesque, and of the best style for the stage, because it set forth the particular turn of mind of each talker; and it was also the first attack

on that stronghold of French dramatic tradition, the monotonous semi-chanting of the conservatoire-taught actor. Here was an elastic, natural dialogue, charged with turns of phrases taken up from the sidewalk, neologisms, slang — in a word, lifelike talk as opposed to the old stilted verbiage.

The play was a failure, of course, as we shall see, for extraneous reasons. The director of the Théâtre Français, M. Edouard Thierry, put it on, and after the sixth performance, during all of which the actors never heard their own voices because of the organized popular tumult, the play was withdrawn. On its publication in book form it sold better than its author's novels — a fact Zola notes with his accustomed scent for the perversity of mankind.

Yet, as Daudet declared, Henrietta Maréchal was throughout "a fine, bold, and novel production. And a short time after, the same people who had hooted it frantically applauded Heloise Paranquet and the Supplice d'une Femme, plays of rapid action going straight to their issue, like a train at full speed, and of which . . . Henrietta Maréchal was the inspiration. And was not the first act, taking place in the opera ball, with its crowd, its abusive chaff, its masks joking and howling in pursuit of each other, that close approach to life and reality, ironic and real as a Gavarni sketch — was it not 'naturalism' on the stage fifteen years before the word 'naturalism' was invented?"

Daudet, with characteristic delicacy and fidelity to the theme, elsewhere describes a reading at Edmond de Goncourt's house of his Les Frères Zemganno — those fraternal heroes of the sawdust.

When the play was read to the members of the Comédie Française, Minister Rouher — who afterward distinguished himself so terribly in the Franco-Prussian War! — suggested to the trembling authors that the valiant girl, who assumes her mother's guilt and is shot dead by her enraged father, be wounded only, and marry her mother's lover! Charming, is it not? The suggestion was frowned down by Marshal Vaillant, an old soldier, who did not fear the smell of stage powder.

Written in 1863, Henrietta Maréchal was not produced until December 5, 1865, at the Comédie Française, and after its speedy withdrawal it was not revived until March 3, 1885, at the Odéon. In the preface to the De Goncourts' Théâtre, Edmond wrote of the painful struggles the pair endured to obtain a hearing. They composed a vaudeville, Sans Titre, which was not heard, and followed this by other attempts, during which they slowly attained some knowledge of dramatic construction, and in 1867 followed Henrietta Maréchal with a five-act prose drama called La Patrie en Danger. This was also read at the Française, in 1868, admired, and dropped. Edmond declared it superior to its predecessor. It deals with the epoch of the

French Revolution, and need not concern us now.

Of interest is his declaration that in the novel he is a realist (he is really a modified romantic, with a romantic vocabulary, selecting for subjects modern themes); but in the drama he totally disagrees with Zola and his naturalistic formulas as applied to the theatre. They have dug up a letter he sent over a decade ago to M. Lothar, who made the German translation of La Faustin. It all is to be found in this preface of 1879. De Goncourt, who naturally ranks the drama below the novel as literature, upholds the conventions of the former. The drama is by its nature romantic and limited in scope. The monologues, asides, dénouements, sympathetic characters, and the rest must always endure. He does think, however, that reality may be brought nearer, and that literary language should give place to a style which will reveal the irregularity and abruptness of vital conversation. In this latter particular he has been a benefactor. Unnatural theatrical dialogue he slew with his supple, free, naturally coloured speech in Henrietta Maréchal. Stage talk should be, De Goncourt asserted, flowing and idiomatic — never bookish. The ball scene in Henrietta proves that the brothers could practise as well as preach.

It is a mistake, too, to think that their novels and plays are immoral or hinge always on the eternal triangle. Various passions are treated

by them in their air-tight receiver; their methods of psychological evisceration recall the laboratory of an analytical chemist. In Germinie it is the degradation of a woman through weakness; in Madame Gervasais — that Odyssey of a woman's soul — it is the mystic passion for religion; in Manette Salomon, art and woman and their dangers to the impressionable artistic temperament; Charles Demailly pictures the gulfs of despair into which the literary, the poetic soul may be plunged; Sœur Philomène shows the combat between religious vows and nature; and so on through a wide gamut. And these two nervous artists have been mockingly called maniacs, their work has been derided as inutile — that work which practically reconstructed the artistic life of the eighteenth century and discovered to itself the artistic soul of the nineteenth. If they had remained normal units of their class, they would have gambled, shot pigeons, sported mistresses, and dabbled in racing, drinking, and the other sterilities of fashionable life. They preferred art, and they were rewarded in the usual fashion. The singular thing is that they expected, ingenuous souls, encouragement from their world. Fame came only when Jules was dead and Edmond too old and embittered to appreciate it. The survivor saw his ideas appropriated by Zola and the younger crowd, and cheapened and coarsened beyond all likeness to the original.

What, then, must have been the dismay and

perplexity of the brothers when they heard the hissing, catcalls, groans, and yells of an organized clique sworn to kill Henriette Maréchal? The body of the house was not hostile; but politics, the Republican opposition to the patronage of the Bonapartes, aroused students on the other side of the Seine, and a scandalous scene, only equalled by the Parisian productions of Hernani and Tannhäuser, occurred. Strangely enough, Théophile Gautier, who had figured in the Hernani fracas, had written the prologue to Henrietta Maréchal, and spoke it without opposition from the malcontents, though he was the librarian of Princess Mathilde. Not a word could be heard in any of the scenes, and when Got, the comedian who played in the cast, — the rest were Delaunay, the Lafontaines, Arnould-Plessis, Bressant, and other distinguished artists, — appeared to announce, as was the custom, the authors' names, he stood for ten minutes unable to make himself heard in the terrific hubbub. The Journal of the brothers contains a minute account of the affair, and of their terror as they stood, pale, breathless, peeping out upon a disordered sea of human faces. After all, it is a joy, despite its frequent injustice, to see a community take its drama seriously and not merely as a first aid to digestion.

The De Goncourts had the satisfaction a few weeks later to hear Molière's Précieuses Ridicules hissed by the same mob believing that it was Henrietta Maréchal.

Reading this play to-day one can see that its novelties must have provoked hostility, though such critics as Jules Janin, Gautier, Sarcey, Uhlbach, Nestor Roqueplan, Paul de Saint-Victor, and others wrote impartial and enthusiastic criticisms. The middle-aged woman who loves a young man was not pleasing upon the boards, and her daughter's death at the pistol of her father caused a shudder; for it was the rank side of adultery exhibited without that pleasing gloze of sentiment so dear to the average Gallic playwright and public. Naturally politics caused the row, for Princess Mathilde had steered the play into the notice of M. Thierry. The speeches are too long and the action moves languidly. Perhaps, after he had surveyed the situation in a calmer mood, Edmond de Goncourt was impelled to write his preface espousing the methods of Meilhac and Halévy. He said, among other acute things, that the avarice in Molière's play, L'Avare, was "l'avarice bouffe" when compared with the powerful and compelling study made by Balzac of Père Grandet.

He also records the cynical remark of a well-known actress who, after listening to the æsthetic *blague* in a well-known literary group, broke forth with this apostrophe, "Vous êtes jeunes, vous autres, mais le théâtre au fond, mes enfants, c'est l'absinthe du mauvais lieu," and to his dying day Edmond de Goncourt called the theatre a place for the exercises of educated dogs or an exhibition of marionettes spouting

their tirades. Between these extremes he thought there was a place where artistic spirit might be displayed in a dignified and beautiful style. But he never found that place, despite his poignant finale, when Henrietta declares that her mother's lover is her own.

Contrast this effective, if too heroic, dénouement with the cold cynicism of Maurice Donnay in L'Autre Danger, where a pure girl is forced by cruel circumstances to hear her mother's shame published, to learn the awful news that the man she loves is the lover of her mother, and, to cap this assault upon our nerves, the lover is made to marry the wretched girl so as to divert suspicion from the inhuman mother.

In the grip of his dark pessimism Edmond de Goncourt predicted that in fifty years the book would kill the theatre. It was about nine years later that Ernest Renan, according to Octave Uzanne, said one evening in conversation among friends, "Fifty years hence no one will open a book." Both prophecies are likely to come to naught. Bad books, bad plays, we shall always have with us. Life seems too brief for the larger cultivation of beautiful art.

X

DUSE AND D'ANNUNZIO

I

Eleonora Duse!

When this extraordinary woman first came to New York in January, 1893, she attracted a small band of admirable lunatics who saw her uncritically as a symbol rather than as an actress. Some of us went to fantastic lengths in our devotion. She was Our Lady of Evil, one of Baudelaire's enigmatic women; Mater Malorium, a figure out of De Quincey's opium-stained dreams; she was not only superior to Sarah of the Sardou régime, but the true successor to Rachel. This semi-absurd jumbling of Poe, Swinburne, Baudelaire, and the Elizabethans — what a tremendous Duchess of Malfi we fancied Duse would make! — was not altogether the fabric of fantasy. Nor was personality the strongest asset in her art. She had suffered academic training; she had practised when young all the scales of thumb-rule theatricalism; she had played Cosette when a child and knew Electra. The apprenticeship then had been exhausting, the thirty-six situations she had by

heart, a long race of play actors determined her vocation, and yet she rose superior to all these things, to experiences that would have either crushed or made mechanical the average artist. Life with its disillusionments was the sculptor that finally wrought the something precious and strange we recognize in Eleonora Duse.

Without especial comeliness, without the golden ductile voice of Bernhardt, Duse so drilled her bodily organs that her gestures, angular if executed by another, become potent instruments; her voice, once rather thin, siccant, now gives a soft, surprised speech; and her face is the mirror of her soul. Across it flit the agonies, the joys, of the modern anæmic, overwrought woman. She excels in the delineation of listless, nervous, hysterical, and half-mad souls. She passes easily from the passionate creatures of Dumas and Sardou to the chillier-blooded women of Ibsen and Sudermann, unbalanced and out of tune with their surroundings. Shall we ever forget her reading of Vladimir's letter in Fédora? And yet her assumption of the Russian was a tour-de-force of technic; temperamentally the rôle belongs to the hotter-tongued Bernhardt. With Santuzza, a primitive nature, she accomplished wonders. That miserable, deserted girl, in a lowly Sicilian village, with her qualms of conscience, her nausea, her hunted looks — here was Verga's heroine stripped of all Mascagni's rustling music, the

soul showing clear and naked against the sordid background of Cavalleria Rusticana.

The slinking ferocity of Cesarine's entrance into her husband's atelier; the scene with Antonine; the interview of Camille with Armand's father; the gracious gayety of Goldoni's La Locandiera; that hideous battle of an exasperated man and woman before the closed doors in Fernande; Magda's wonderful blush as she meets Kellar, the cold-hearted prig, who ruined her — all these stale situations and well-worn types, Magda being an honourable exception, Duse literally re-created. In them we felt the power of her intellect, the magic of the woman. And she stared tradition in the face by refusing to "make up," unconcealing her own hair and doing nothing to restrict the plasticity of her figure. Now she wears wigs, uses rouge discreetly, for her hair is gray and her face more matured. But her art is broader, though losing none of its former subtlety. There is more weight, more brilliancy, in her action and gesture, and that doubtless prompted some critics to compare her to Sarah Bernhardt. But she is still Eleonora Duse, the woman with the imagination, the glance, and the beautiful hands.

The wisdom of her choice in selecting only D'Annunzio's dramas is not altogether apparent. She will listen to no advice; perhaps she is on a mission; perhaps she wishes to make known everywhere the genius of her young countryman, and to go back with the means to raise

upon the border of Lake Albano a great independent theatre, the poet's dream of a dramatic Bayreuth. The D'Annunzio plays are not of the kind that appeal to the larger public. For the student of contemporary drama they are of surpassing interest in their freedom from conventional stage trickery and characterization; La Gioconda, La Citta Morta, are really lyric masterpieces in little, though many will wince at the themes, at their bold development and treatment. When floated on the wings of Richard Wagner's mighty music in Die Walküre, the incestuous loves of Siegmund and Sieglinde are applauded; prose, be it as polished and as sonorous as D'Annunzio's, has not the same privilege as music. So the motto of Catulle Mendès for a playhouse has a point, "Abandon all reality ye who would enter here." And D'Annunzio never falters before harsh reality, as those who have read his romances well know. In each of his plays we assist at the toilette of a woman's soul.

Duse's art, however, covers a multitude of D'Annunzio's morbidities — everything that does not derive from bread and butter, children in arms, politics, dog-shows and gowns, is adjudged morbid by a world that feeds on divorce scandals, crimes of the day, and the diversions of multi-millionnaires. D'Annunzio, who does not pretend to be a mere painter of manners, is given over entirely to the portraying of the primary passions. This Swinburne of Italy

became famous in his sixteenth year (he was born in 1864, and his real name is said to be Gaetano Rapagnetto). Since then he has succeeded the poet Carducci in the affections of a certain public, though his poetic ancestry may be easily traced to Shelley, Baudelaire, Carducci, and Stecchetti. From verse he passed to prose, writing in a highly coloured, fluid style a group of novels called The Romances of the Rose, Lily, and Pomegranate. The Triumph of Death is the best known to English and American readers, though Fuoco — The Flame of Life — set wagging the tongues of the curious by its carefully exposed portraits of a celebrated Italian actress and D'Annunzio himself. In that astonishing performance, the taste of which can be hardly gauged by any but Latin standards, one of the D'Annunzio plays — The Dead City — is set forth in detail. Whether the betrayal of a woman's soul — for D'Annunzio is a true soul-hunter — was made with the concurrence of the subject, no one seems to know. Of the psychologic value of the study there can be but one opinion. It is unique, it is painful, it is appallingly true. D'Annunzio now enjoys a European reputation. His art, despite its exquisite workmanship, is still a gallery of echoes. He has absorbed all contemporary culture, and so chiselled is his prose that he has been called "the Italian Flaubert." A profound student of the classics, he is rich in his scholarly allusions. The late Pope is said to have delighted

in the melodious thunder-pool of his style. From Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Bourget, Daudet, Maeterlinck, Tolstoy, and Dostoïevsky he has absorbed much; while he evidently knows the English classics. Some of his dramatic figures seem to have stepped out of John Webster or John Ford's pages. In his short tales, Novelle della Pescara, he has utilized a number of De Maupassant's themes, in an individual manner; but the assimilation is complete. Compare La Ficelle and Foire de Candea — the transposition of character and place are most deftly accomplished, as a writer in the *Mercure de France* has shown. That D'Annunzio has chosen to depict decadent men and women, and all bristling with vitality, is his personal idiosyncrasy. His chief defect is an absolute lack of humour, and this, coupled with the tropical quality of his art, causes a certain monotony — we breathe a dense, languorous atmosphere. Human interest in the daily sense of the phrase is often absent. He loves nature. He describes her lovingly. His formal sense is exquisite; yet too much literature often kills the humanity of his characters. And he is always more lyric than dramatic.

"Gabriele d'Annunzio," writes M. Huret, "is of medium height, slender, not to say frail, with short, reddish hair which is growing thin on the top of his finely shaped head, and this he brushes straight back at the temples; his back already somewhat bent, he has the air of one of those aristocratic beings who have begun life

too soon. His ruddy mustache is trimmed close to the lip, and the points are turned up sharply at the corners, while the chin ends in a little pointed beard. The nose is regular and shows strength; the division between the nostrils extends below in a prominent lobe. His eyes, of pale blue, like a faded violet, are half veiled by his heavy lids. Beneath these eyes the network of fine lines tells the story of precocious weariness. The finely shaped mouth opens widely in a smile over carefully tended teeth. And one may search in vain in that face for any trace of the overwhelming, almost savage, sensuality which his privileged hero manifests in all his novels. The appearance of his physiognomy as a whole is rather self-contained and cold. He is a thinker, assuredly quite master of himself, much more given to enthusiasm over a beautiful verse than capable of a real emotion over another's grief. Besides, has he not written, 'One must keep one's liberty complete at any cost, even in intoxication'?"

D'Annunzio has ever been a spoiled darling of the Muses. At the age of sixteen, after he had published that turbulently erotic book of verse, Primo Vere, Marc Monnier, the critic, wrote of him in the *Revue Suisse*, "If I were one of his masters I should give him a medal and the stick."

It is to be hoped that with increasing age and experience he will pierce beneath the vesture of things and seek for the message spiritual. He

is now the poet of the fleshly, albeit an interpreter of its beauties. The poet in him celebrates the joy of living, the joys of love, of death, — oh, he can pipe you many sweet lays of Death the Triumpher! — of wine, of art. He has just begun to write for the stage, and is unduly preoccupied with the sumptuousness of externals, with the bravery of words, with the torturing complexities of character.

II

Gabriele d'Annunzio's La Gioconda is a four-act tragedy of power, beauty, and horror. Despite the reputation of the poet-dramatist and his undeniable qualities of copious invention, skilful characterization, and prime literary ability, this piece was not warmly received in Italy. Its unrelieved analysis, its slowly accumulating burden of misery, and the cruelty of the climax do not allure the average listener. And the poet in D'Annunzio shows at every line — there are many gorgeous ones spoken in La Gioconda.

Duse possesses the subtle hands of that painter's Lisa Gioconda, and as the motive of D'Annunzio's play springs from a pair of hands — its original title was The Tragedy of the Beautiful Hands — Signora Duse makes of her fingers ten eloquent signals.

The opportunity for theatric climax is rare in La Gioconda; but when it does come the effect is strong. A wife, whose love and devotion are slighted, dares to face her rival in the studio of

the sculptor-husband. He has endeavoured desperately to wean himself from his passion for the model who posed as his masterpiece, a Sphinx. Attempted suicide before the action of the play proved how deeply sunk in his imagination is this crazy infatuation. His wife meets the woman, who is young, beautiful, strange, and absolutely enamoured of the sculptor. Of her sincerity there is no doubt. Then the dramatist throws wire-drawn analysis to the winds and in a scene of peculiar brutality the women duel for the possession of the gifted, worthless man.

Here Duse's imagination and technic are revealed. She must remain the refined woman, though her brain is afire, her soul up in arms. In acrid terms of reproach and irony she defies the temptress of her husband, knowing full well that he is lost to her; in the very flush of defeat she would pluck victory by the sleeve. Startled by the ready assurance, enraged by the seemingly triumphant wife, Gioconda, the model, rushes into the atelier, bent upon destroying her counterfeit in clay, — that figure she so lovingly guarded during the sculptor's illness.

She had watched the work of his soul, while his wife nursed only his sick body. With this she taunts the other. In despair before the looming catastrophe, Duse, the wife, cries that she has lied, that her husband still loves his model. But it is too late. The struggle of the women is heard. A crash and a scream

announce that the statue has been overthrown. Then an ugly Sardou motive is obtruded.

With the shadow of eternal regret in her eyes, her hands wrapped in the wet cloths that bound the clay, Duse staggers from behind the draperies of the atelier. She has saved her husband's statue, but her beautiful hands are hopelessly maimed. This scene is hideously cruel. And to top the *crescendo* of woe, the vacillating man runs in. "You, you, you!" sobs his wife; "it is saved," and the curtain blots the agonizing situation from our eye, not from our memory.

The play might be truthfully called The Triumph of Art, for, if it poses any problem at all, it is this: What will an artist, a sensuous, weak decadent, do when confronted by the choice of relinquishing his wife or his mistress? The latter is surpassingly beautiful, and, as he tells his friend, the painter, in Act I, she is his sole inspiration, the guiding pillar of flame for his art. "She has a thousand statues in her," in that marvellous body that "is like a look." He loves his wife, too, but she does not reveal to him his entire creative self. She is a staff to lean upon, not an electric impulse in his life. To the everyday observer all this seems a variation of an old story. Lucio is tired of Silvia, his wife, and dazzles himself with the sophistries of art — base sensuality being the real reason for his behaviour.

But this supposition is only a half-truth. Lucio has a species of accursed temperament

that needs must feed upon the exquisite surfaces of beautiful things. He is a true artist of mediæval times, loving colour and form for their own sake; art for art is his motto, as it was Benvenuto Cellini's, as it was George Eliot's Tito Melemo. Lucio's most eloquent speech describes the appeal Gioconda makes to his artistic nature, the creative ardour she arouses. This speech is of much significance.

Despicable as is the man, — and we never doubt his ultimate desertion of his wife, — there is no denying the grim truth with which he is depicted. That he is not sympathetic is hardly our affair. It is bad art to preach, and that D'Annunzio never does. He simply sets before us, with consummate address, a few episodes in the life of an unhappy family, leaving us to draw our own inferences. His men and women are genuinely alive, and, given their various temperaments, they act as they inevitably would in the world of the living.

The character of the wife, Silvia, is beautiful despite the dissonance of the fatal untruth she utters. Without mawkish sentimentality, she divines the eternal child that is the basis of every artist, and so she forgives her husband. As portrayed by Duse, one feels that lurking in the sanctuary of her innermost being there is the sad, bitter suspicion that her sacrifice will be in vain.

But she stops not to count the cost, and, at the end of Act I, when the emotional, weak-

spined fellow, touched by her sacrifice, casts himself sobbing at her knees, her great heart surrenders, and she pets and pities him. The exquisite tenderness, soft credulity, and suppressed sweetness of Duse here sound like a strain of marvellous music. The chords of human sympathy sing melodiously. And her every movement has the actuality of life.

After the third act any dramatist would have cried quits. Not so D'Annunzio. He wishes to tell us that Silvia is deserted forever. Pathos, poetic in its quality, contrasts with the horror of the preceding scene. We are shown Silvia at the seaside, her crushed hands concealed. To her comes La Sirenetta, an elfin creature of the sea, a tiny, fantastic fisher maid, who sings the delightful ballad of the Seven Sisters and consoles the sorrowful wife and mother. Yes, Silvia has a daughter, Beata, who is kept in ignorance of her mother's misfortune.

It is now that the spectator feels the remorseless grip of the poet. La Sirenetta offers a starfish to Silvia and wonders why she does not accept it. She is the solitary shaft of sunshine in the play. Beata runs in with flowers for her mother. It is a poignant touch. The chilly indifference of the dramatist to the suffering of his characters, his complete detachment, is art of a rarefied sort, though not the art that will endear him to all. "Beata!" exclaims the poor mother, making a futile gesture with her mutilated arms. "You are crying! You are

crying!" sobs the child, throwing herself upon her mother's breast. The flowers slip to earth.

A trait of Duse is the stifling of her tears when her sister visits her. She involuntarily lifts her arms, and then, checking herself with an indescribable movement, she rests her face upon her sister's shoulder. There the tears fall. There she dries them. It is characteristic Duse. Her entire assumption is on the plane of exalted realism. We know that Silvia has a beautiful, strong soul, that she succumbs to the awful pressure of temptation; and the lie she tells is henceforth a memory never lifted from her life. In a measure she accepts with resignation physical torture and loss of her husband. D'Annunzio has not before created such a noble woman. Lucio is only a variant of his typical man: George Aurispa, Andrea Sperelli, and the rest of his amateurs in corruption and artistic hunters of morbid sensation. Silvia is unique. Silvia is adorable as Duse presents her. Throughout this most human among actresses is in constant modulation; her very silence is pregnant with suggestion. She is the exponent of an art that is baffling in its coincidence with nature. From nature what secret accents has this Italian woman not overheard? — secrets that she embodies in her art.

There are many beauties in the play, beauties of style, though the dialogue in the early acts is in excess of the movement. This is quite in consonance with continental ideas of playwriting.

In Europe the art of elocution is not a lost one, as it is on the English stage. The Italians and the French often speak for the sheer beauty of their expressive tongues. So the action halts and there are some amateurish strokes betrayed in the bringing on of his characters by D'Annunzio. But the burning rhetoric of the young poet lends fascination to several scenes — notably the interview of painter and sculptor in Act II. His brother-poet, Arthur Symons, has Englished D'Annunzio's prose and has accomplished his task with rare distinction.

III

D'Annunzio's Francesca da Rimini is glorified melodrama. It is unnecessary to revert to the plays, poems, books, pictures, symphonies, that have been made with the unhappy loves of Francesca and Paolo as a theme. From the day when the great Florentine exile sang in Canto V of his Hell, "In its leaves that day we read no more," Dante inspired painters, poets, sculptors, — Rodin not among the least, — musicians, and playwrights. Leigh Hunt wrote The Story of Rimini; there is George Boker's commonplace play, in which Lawrence Barrett, Louis James, Otis Skinner, and others have appeared; there is an old play by Silvio Pellico, and the two new settings of the story by Stephen Phillips and Marion Crawford — the latter's version prepared for Sarah Bernhardt — are of yes-

terday's doings. Both Liszt and Tschaïkowsky have composed symphonic poems on the subject.

And now D'Annunzio, as if he wished to demonstrate his fitness in the handling of any dramatic form, conceived and executed a species of poetic melodrama in which the life of a feudal period is unrolled before us in five glowing tableaux. Prodigality of colour, bloody war, horrid lusts, are mingled artistically with the processional attitudes of tirewomen, sweet singing, and interludes of lyric passion. As in a mirrored dream of Burne-Jones, Francesca moves slowly from rapt maidenhood to forced marriage; from unhappy marriage to deception and death. Not content to follow the bare lines of the ancient chronicle, the playwright weaves into his symphony of adulterous passion historic episodes and pictures of manners. It is one epoch of strange, repellent contrasts. Souls are danced to the tune of graceful madrigals, and roses often dyed a deeper hue by blood. In the sphere of action the play mostly lives, though there are some halting moments of poetic delicacy and introspection set over against operatic episodes. We first assist at a scene of jester and damsels which recalls Bandello or Boccaccio. It is gay and humorous, with the coarse, unseemly humour of the time. Alberich, teased by the three mermaids in Rheingold, is recalled. Two brothers of Francesca indulge in fierce recriminations during which a veiled accusation

of attempted parricide is made, with the result that murder is barely escaped.

Francesca is deliberately betrayed by her brother, Ostasio Polenta, into the arms of the "Lamester" Giovanni Malatesta. She believes that she is wedding his brother Paolo, called the handsome one, skilled in the fine arts, of goodly presence, a warrior and a lover of sport. By a device near the close of Act I he is made to pass and be seen by Francesca. She goes to her doom willingly. She loves, but does not know that Paolo is a married man.

In the second act, a year later, Francesca, in a Saracenic headdress, seems to have aged ten years. On the battlement of her husband's fortress, amid the enginery of war, Greek fire boiling in the caldron, darts flaming, missiles, catapults, ballista, and outlandish weapons that crowd the summit of the tower, she stands. There is a terrific din; crossbows twang, shoutings and tocsins are heard. Francesca, displaying true mediæval immobility at all these sights and sounds, hovers about the platform, questioning, curious.

She insists on tampering with a torch of the deadly Greek fire, and it evokes from the poet a flock of his flaming images that Swinburne alone might parallel. As Paolo enters, eager for the fight, Francesca's attitude shifts. At once we see her aroused interest. She loved him, loves him. Their interview contains some striking speeches. "And then I saw your face, silent

between the spears of the horsemen," she tells him, and adds that then she longed for death. He replies in a like exalted strain. He exposes himself at the open portcullis, and she trembles but is brave.

Her Pater Noster is an outlet for her overcharged feelings. It was delivered by Duse with shivering eloquence. The intensity of the scene is heightened by the entrance of her husband, surnamed Gianciotto. He limps, but is a mighty warrior in the land. The characters of the two brothers are exposed in a few lines. Still another brother appears, Malatestino. He is the youngest. His eye has just been destroyed during this battle. Malevolent, cruel, he too loves Francesca. In a later act he plays the part of Iago to his elder brother.

Act III is in the earlier half both a picture and a promise. Little happens. We see Francesca in a rare room, with the Adriatic Sea glimpsed through the open windows. This scene is beautifully presented. Upon a unique lectern is placed a tome, The History of Launcelot of the Lake, the very book mentioned by Dante as the fatal one. There are girlish jesting and chattering. Francesca reads aloud. It may be noticed that at the beginning of Act I the old romance of Tristan and Isolde is alluded to, thus suggesting the ultimate ending of Francesca and Paolo.

Throughout there are these delicate loops of leading motives binding firmly the somewhat

loosely built dramatic tale. Francesca relates her dream to her slave, Smaragdi. It is of a pursuit through dim woods of a naked woman by a savage knight and his mastiffs. The vision always ends in the same manner. The knight cuts out her heart and throws it to the hungry dogs; they devour it.

The entrance of a voluble merchant and later an astrologer and the jester relaxes the tense melancholy of the love-lorn lady. A scene of bright foolery follows. It is touched by no little fancy. And then the slave whispers that Paolo is without. Sending away her people, she receives him. There is the inevitable duo of amorous despair and the fateful reading. Here D'Annunzio handles a foreseen situation with poetic skill. He manages to create an atmosphere of suspense from the beginning. The final cry of Francesca, "No, Paolo!" is worth a page of overwrought adjectives and writhing embraces.

Act IV, the cruellest of the five, is devoted to the arousing of Giovanni's suspicions. This is easily accomplished by Malatestino, the wicked younger brother. Jealous of Paolo, he shocks Francesca with his hints, his hot advances, and the hideous cruelty he exhibits in cutting off the head of a prisoner. He drags on the stage the head, enveloped in a bag. It is heavy, he remarks. Oddly enough, D'Annunzio manages matters so that we sympathize with the deceived husband — rather an un-Latin proceeding.

In the final act D'Annunzio, we feel, has Shakespeare before him. The scene of Othello is evoked at once, not in incident, but because of the spiritual, tragic atmosphere. Francesca is asleep; she moans, for she dreams. Her maidens are sent away. Her slave is called, but comes not. Tricked by this plotted absence, Paolo enters. The lovers are soon caught and slain by Giovanni, who breaks his sword across his knee. Every detail is admirably managed.

Not the least potent factor is the absence of all remorse shown by Francesca. The victim of deceit, she does not hesitate to deceive in return. In her love passages, Duse was truthful to a degree. She invested Francesca with just the proper poise, dignity, and suppressed melancholy.

Francesca da Rimini is the first of D'Annunzio's dramatic efforts that attracted popular favour. It is an interesting rather than a great play, though full of inspiring poetry. It was first given, December 9, 1901, at Teatro Costanzi, Rome, by the Duse Company, with the exception that Gustavo Salvini was the Paolo on that occasion.

IV

Compared to La Gioconda, The Dead City is a highly polished specimen of the static drama; there is little that is dynamic until the scene before the last. And the theme, thundercharged as it is with symbolism, is fitter for

reading than for publication before the footlights. The play is literature first, drama afterward. Sarah Bernhardt produced it in Paris.

Incest as a subject for dramatic treatment is no new thing. The Greeks employed it as a leitmotive of horror, and in the Œdipus of Sophocles, the Hippolytus of Euripides — we recall with grateful memories Bernhardt's puissant Phèdre in Racine's paraphrase of the Greek dramatist — and in the Bible itself this dire theme may be encountered, though no modern has had the courage to set the episode of Tamar and Amnon in the Book of Samuel. Later, in the flush of the seventeenth-century dramatic renascence, John Ford wrote his masterpiece, The Brother and Sister.

In that play, admired of Charles Lamb, is set forth with a wealth of realism undreamed of by D'Annunzio and the Greeks the details of a lamentable passion, and so cunning is the art of Ford that we find ourselves pitying the unhappy pair, Giovanni and Annabella, poor playthings of the gods. Of Wagner's Die Walküre it is unnecessary to speak. Music, as Henry James remarks, is a great solvent.

But mark the handling of the young Italian poet. Obsessed by the Greeks, he has constructed his tragedy on antique lines. Crime is hinted at; we even see an adulterous love — for evil passions hunt in couples throughout this dream-like story — in development; almost is a catastrophe precipitated. The incest, however,

is potential. It is only an idea. It scourges the two men like whips in the hands of the avenging Furies. And it finally dooms an innocent creature, hopelessly involving at the same time the happiness of three survivors.

It is then a crime contemplated, not accomplished, this love of a brother for a sister. A critic might show that the Italian poet's form is a replica of the Greek with several variations; there is a breach of unity of place in the last act, and no "false catastrophe" is hinted at in the fourth act. This W. F. Apthorp has pointed out. It is not the sole departure. Instead of presenting us with a frozen imitation of Grecian tragedy, like most writers who have attempted to cope with the classics, D'Annunzio frankly filled the antique mould with modern feeling.

His men and women are modern; they are of to-day, neurotic, morbid, febrile souls. And this modern atmosphere is a jangling dissonance to them that prefer their tragedy unadulterated. Without an ounce of John Ford's lusty Elizabethan animalism, D'Annunzio so contrives his play of character and shock of incident that we are disquieted, dismayed, not so much by the theme as by its insidious music.

With his customary audacity he places his action in Greece, on the plain of Argolis; archæology is the background. Four friends are engaged in excavating the dead city of Mycenæ, where Schliemann discovered, or thought he discovered, the tombs and dusty bones of the

Homeric heroes. From these tainted remains is exhaled the moral malaria that sets in action D'Annunzio's piece. It is a genuinely original and morbid idea.

The house of the men of Atreus is dug up, and from it comes spiritual pollution. Like a master of string-quartet writing the author has manipulated his four characters so skilfully that the melody worked is ever mysterious, ever melancholy. Anna is blind; she is the wife of Alessandro, a poet and scholar. Alessandro is morally blind, for he loves the younger Bianca, the sister of his friend Leonardo. Leonardo, the successful explorer and rifler of Homeric tombs, loves his own sister, — that ancient poison working in his veins, — and with this uncanny combination D'Annunzio plays his sinister tunes, evokes his strange harmonies.

There is no necessity of disputing the daring of this scheme, and just as inutile would be a discussion of its ethics. It seems that in his three plays, La Gioconda, La Citta Morta, and Francesca da Rimini, D'Annunzio has tried his 'prentice hand at modern realism, ancient tragedy, and historical melodrama. They are all three largely experimental, and, it must not be forgotten, the works of a beginner.

It is the externals of the drama with which we are more concerned. Of five acts three were placed in the *loggia* of Leonardo's house; Act II is the interior of the same house; Act V a fountain not far away. It is then a

soul tragedy that is enacted, and one cannot quite escape the feeling that much study of Maeterlinck has been responsible for the sullen, depressing atmosphere. There is in the dialogue, with its haunting repetitions, the same electric apprehension sensed in the Belgian's poems. Gestures, movements, the music of sonorous speech, slow glances, and pauses — the pause is a big factor in Maeterlinck — are woven into a sort of incomprehensible symphony.

Seemingly subordinate, Eleonora Duse is the real protagonist. Blind, though not from birth, because of her exquisite tactile sensibility she understands the love of her husband for her friend. An exalted sentiment of renunciation prompts her to probe this secret passion, and when she discovers that Bianca is languishing, too, her mind is made up. She will efface herself. She will slay her useless life, so that two souls may thrive in happiness. More than this, she tempts her husband with the ripe beauty of Bianca. Here is an un-Greek idea at once. It is altruism gone mad. From Anna is mercifully kept the unholy love of the brother; nor is it revealed to Bianca. Therein lies another deviation from antique models. A story in classical literature is never told obliquely.

Duse, who has extraordinary powers of intuition, the logic of her temperament, impersonated Anna with unvarying truth and veiled sweetness, indicating by shades almost too fine for the frame of the theatre her mental atti-

tudes toward her companions. There are few climaxes for her, the part being a passive one, the action being buried in the text. But she has opportunities. Her cry for "Light!" is one; and almost at the drop of the last curtain she finds her way to the fountain where, lured by the brother Alessandro, Bianca, his hapless victim, is murdered by being drowned in the murmuring waters which the pair have so often watched.

Anna utters the names in the terrified accents of the lost blind. She seeks, too, her husband. All the day she anticipated tragedy. It hung over her soul like a smoky pall. She feels her way to the fountain and there touching with her feet the body of the dead girl she distractedly searches for signs of life. It is a dramatic moment. Then arising with a shudder she shouts, joyfully:—

"Vedo! Vedo!" ("I see! I see!"). Her physical sight is restored and her own hold on life becomes at once intensified; her unselfishness is shed. And it is at this hopeless moment that the dramatist unseals her vision and closes his play, leaving the wretched woman to face the loss of Bianca and possibly the lunacy of her husband and his friend. If they do not go mad it is because their nerves have become dulled to the hideousness of life. They are abnormal; every one in the play, excepting the girl Bianca, is abnormal. Even the nurse does not escape the taint. She is a figure out

of Maeterlinck, and doubtless knows the madness that lurks in moon-haunted corridors!

That Duse triumphed was to be expected. She awed rather than astonished us, her skill taking on new meanings, new colours. All together, her art was a unique something that closely bordered on the clairvoyant. Her helpless silences were actually terrifying; her poses most pathetic. Bianca Maria was admirably played by Signorina Civani, the Sirenetta of La Gioconda. She noted most fluently the loving, healthy nature of the girl who falls a victim to the shafts of Eros. It is with Sophocles's Antigone that the action begins; it is with a motto from Antigone, Eros, unconquered in strife, that the play is overshadowed.

V

D'Annunzio's new play, The Daughter of Jorio, has achieved some success in Italy, despite the absence of Eleonora Duse from the cast, and despite the reaction against the enthusiasm of its *première*. When the drama was produced at Milan it was put on for a "run," or the European equivalent of one. There was severe criticism, but the consensus seems to be that in his latest work that extraordinary creature, D'Annunzio, has outshone his earlier dramatic efforts.

The chief quality that impresses itself upon the reader of La Figlia di Jorio is its superior

dramatic movement as compared, for example, with The Dead City or Francesca da Rimini by the same writer. The first act is full of vitality, its characterization excellent; the cuts in Acts II and III made by D'Annunzio for the first performance greatly benefit the somewhat sluggish *tempi* of these scenes. The old rhetorician and lover of beautiful phrases has not been killed in the Italian poet, merely "scotched." For one thing, he has struck that theatrical vein of gold, a new background, new methods of speech, new costumes, new ideas — or, rather, most ancient ones, though novel to the stage. Travelling with his friend, the painter Michetti, one summer in the savage mountainous country of the Abruzzi, D'Annunzio saturated himself with his accustomed receptivity to a strange people and environment, which has resulted in a powerful tragedy. Like Verga's discovery of the Sicilian peasant in Cavalleria Rusticana — a veritable treasure-trove for that poet and also for Mascagni — D'Annunzio in his encounter with the curious customs and pagan personalities of the hardy, superstitious Abruzzi, was enabled to lay up a stock of images for his new work. I doubt, however, if he has succeeded as well as Verga in getting close to the skin and soil of this peasantry. There is more than one awkward hiatus in The Daughter of Jorio, and an almost epileptic intensity in the development of the witch girl's character.

The first act is the best, because the simplest

and most sincere. It shows us a living room in a rustic house. The background and "properties" are said to be wonderfully realistic. Aligi, the shepherd, is to marry. His bride's name is Vienda. He does not love her, for she was chosen by his parents — and in this old Italian land the father's command is law. The betrothal ceremonies are beginning. The groom's sisters are near by. He is ill at ease, for he has been dreaming strange dreams. Vienda spills the broken bread of betrothal from her lap upon the floor. It is a maleficent sign. Suddenly there comes a noise of shouting and music. The harvesters, crazy with drink and the torrid heat of the sun, rush in. They have come to celebrate. They are also chasing a human being, a miserable hunted girl of bad repute, the daughter of Jorio, the magician. Hunted down, she claims sanctuary in the household. Although she is of ill-fame, although Aligi's father, Lazaro, has been wounded in a squabble about this girl, Mila di Codra, she is sheltered by the woman. Aligi is for turning her away; her coming spells more bad luck; the infuriated mob without demand admittance. Enraged, the shepherd raises his staff to strike the unhappy fugitive. As he does this he is overtaken by fresh visions; he thinks he sees Mila guarded by a weeping angel. He falls at her feet begging her pardon. A cross is laid over the threshold, a litany sung by his sisters, and the angry reapers are hypnotized. They enter

singly, kiss the cross, and dissolve homeward. Lazaro enters with his head in a bandage and Mila escapes. Another ill omen — the father and son both love the same woman.

The second act discovers Aligi and Mila in a mountainous cave where they have lived for six months — in a state of innocence. Here the credulity of the spectator is taxed, and the lyric ecstasy of the poet waxes. It is nevertheless an idyllic episode. One kiss is exchanged, the first and the last, for Lazaro eventually finds his now disgraced son, and with a pair of sturdy rustics comes to carry away the witch. In the conflict that ensues the son murders the father. Act III brings us back to the old home of Aligi. His father's corpse lies in the garden, according to custom. The son is condemned to the awful death of the parricide — after his offending hand is cut off he is to be tied in a sack with a fierce dog and then thrown into the river. The end may be surmised. One consolation is not denied him — a cup of drink to induce forgetfulness. As the preparations are about completed Mila bursts upon the crowded scene — an impressive one, according to printed reports — and takes upon herself the blame of the affair. She it was, she declares, who murdered Lazaro. Aligi curses her in his delirium, as she is dragged away to be burnt alive, she the witch, the daughter of Jorio. Her triumphant voice is heard to the last, while for a background there is the chanting of the requiem and the trium-

phant yelling and imprecations of the shepherds, the Abruzzi lusting for a human sacrifice. Then the curtain falls. Several critics discern in all this the triumph of religion over the senses — a solution that does their ingenuity credit, though far from convincing.

It may be seen that there is real dramatic worth in the play, love and sacrifice being its very pith. Better still, the poet has become less self-absorbed and consequently more objective. The human note predominates in this wild and highly coloured music. In his plays and novels and verse he has himself been the artistic and sterile hero — as Eleonora Duse, in the plays and one novel, their heroine. A German critic declares that Mila is only a sister of the crazy woman in A Spring Morning's Dream — as she, Duse, also is related to Silvia in Gio conda, to the blind wife in The Dead City, and Francesca, as well as La Foscarina in Fuoco, Duse, Eleonora Duse, always Duse. Lucky, thrice happy poet, to have been inspired by such a model! To have had the opportunity of studying such a sublime, unhappy soul as is Duse's!

A German critic speaks slightingly of Das Geklingel der schönen Phrasen — the jingling of dulcet phrases — as a drawback to the action. Doubtless this is true. Often we cannot hear the play because of the words. The chief thing to be remarked, however, is the improvement in dramatic spirit and rhythm and the gratifying supremacy of the dramatic over the lyric and

literary qualities — the latter hitherto anti-dramatic elements in the plays of D'Annunzio.

The poet is now working on a new three-act tragedy, The Ship, — in which Duse is to appear at La Scala this spring. The theme is Venetian — that Venice which both Duse and D'Annunzio love so well; and also on a modern drama entitled, The Light Under the Bushel.

XI

VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

"In life," said Barbey d'Aurevilly, "we are strangled between two doors, of which the one is labelled *Too Soon* and the other *Too Late*." The brilliant Beau Brummel of French literature who uttered this fatidical speech was a contemporary of the unhappy, impulsive man of genius, poet, mystic, and dramatist, who set Paris agog with his novels, short stories, plays, his half-crazy conduct, his epigrams, his fantastic litigations, and his cruel death — Villiers de l'Isle Adam. The bosom friend of Charles Baudelaire and Richard Wagner, petted at Bayreuth, fêted in Paris, nevertheless he died in want, was buried by his friends, and was proud, lonely, aristocratic to the very end — a death from cancer.

His life furnishes material for one of his ironic, bitter, disturbing tales. Born in Brittany, November 28, 1838, he died at Paris in a religious hospital, August 19, 1889. A fierce, even militant, Roman Catholic — he dedicated a book to the Pope — he shocked his coreligionists by the confusing mixture of fanatical piety and fantastic blasphemy which winds through his bizarre works. He is best known to Americans by the

story in his Contes Cruels, entitled, The Torture by Hope, which recalls Poe at his best, the Poe of The Pit and the Pendulum. His little play, The Revolt, was translated and first appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1897. Arthur Symons has translated a poem, Aveu, and Vance Thompson, in the defunct pages of *Mlle. New York*, wrote often of the celebrated Frenchman.

The critical bibliography of Villiers de l'Isle Adam is not a vast one. There is, besides his principal works, only his life by his cousin Vicomte Robert du Pontavice de Heussey; Rémy de Gourmont's brief, sympathetic notice in his inimitable Le Livre des Masques; Anatole France in La Vie Littéraire has dealt with the poet most subtly, as is his wont; Arthur Symons's study; Mallarmé's lecture; a few caricatures and a sketch by Paul Verlaine; a historic consideration by Alexis von Kraemer, translated from the Finnish; a charming and extended étude by Gustave Kahn; short essays by the lamented Hennequin, by J. K. Huysmans, in A Rebours, by Sarcey, Gustave Guiches, Henry Bordeaux, Teodor de Wyzewa, Georges Rodenback, Catulle Mendès; and fragmentary accounts in the ever valuable *Mercure de France*—and there the list is snuffed out.

Not precisely dissolute, rather disorganized, the life of Adam could be transformed into an object sermon by the wily educator and moralmonger. But that would be a poor way of viewing it. Born without average will power, except

the will to imagine beautiful and strange things, Villiers, as he is generally called, all his years fought the contending impulses of his dual nature; fought bravely sometimes in the open air with the blue sky smiling down on him; fought as if facing an ambuscade at dark, and under the lowering clouds when all the powers of evil were abroad and at his elbow. Then, he was what Bayard Taylor called Edgar Poe — a bird of the night; a prowling noctambulist; a feverish being, whose violent gestures, burning eyes, and irresolute somnambulistic gait told the tale, the damnable and thrice-told tale, of wasted genius.

Poe is the literary ancestor of nearly all the Parnassian and Diabolic groups — ah, this mania for schools and groups and movements in Paris! Poe begat Baudelaire and Baudelaire begat Barbey d'Aurevilly and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and the last-named begat Verlaine and Huysmans — and a long chain of other gifted men can claim these two as parents, even to Mallarmé, De Maupassant, and Henri de Regnier (who has read the Horla of Guy de Maupassant will feel that therein the unhappy disciple of Flaubert has raised to a terrifying degree the methods of Poe; nor must Regnier's La Canne de Jaspe be forgotten). But they all come from Poe; Poe, who influenced Swinburne through Baudelaire; Poe, who nearly swept the young Maeterlinck from his moorings in the stagnant fens and under the morose sky of his lowlands. If we

have no great school of literature in America, we can at least point to Poe as the progenitor of a half-dozen continental literatures.

Villiers can be traced to Poe on one side, just as Châteaubriand is another of his ancestors. M. de Gourmont deplores the criticism which would detach Villiers from his time and isolate him as a species of intellectual monster. There is much that is fantastic, even bizarre, in his work, and he never escaped the besetting sin of his associates, headed by Baudelaire, the childish desire to *épater le bourgeois*, to shock conventional morality and manners by eccentric behaviour, outrageous speech, and paradoxical writings. This legacy of the romantic movement of 1830 really came across the water in Byron's poses of wickedness and heroic mystifications. It was, in reality, the Byronic attitude transposed to the Paris boulevards. Gautier wore a pink doublet (not scarlet, he says), and it was elevated to a symbol. Let us be scarlet, said these wild, young fellows, let our sins be splendid! And then the crew would wander abroad, making the night resound with their lyric outbursts, happy if a respectable citizen were scandalized, and in their pockets, a world too wide for their money, hardly the price of a bottle!

It was glorious, and it was art. But who cared, who knew? If a man of Baudelaire's intellectual powers, a profound critic, genius, and poet, could dye his hair green, simply to attract attention in the cafés, why should

not men of lesser abilities follow suit and commit all manner of extravagant pranks? Leconte de Lisle, impeccable poet and a prim sort of person, impatiently exclaimed: "Oh, ces jeunes gens! Tous fumistes!" And Thiers allowed to escape him the one *mot* of his complacent life worth remembering, "The Romanticists — that's the Commune!" Perhaps the pink doublets and strange oaths of Ernani and 1830 were transformed into the grim figures of that later lurid epoch.

Villiers was in the very core of this artistic Paris. He slept all day — or dreamed. At nightfall he stepped across the sill of his door, and when he had friends, money, glory, he dined at Brébant's; when he was shabby, he remained on the exterior boulevard. There, in some modest café, seated at a table surrounded by disciples eager for his ideas, his poetry, his scintillating wit, — eager to steal it and sell it as their own, — the Master spoke, his vague blue eyes gleaming, his long white hand waving aloft like a flag of revolt. What dreams, what eloquence, what a soul, went under on this ignoble battle-field! What slain ideals and poetry wasted in the very utterance, and what inroads on a nervous, sickly constitution! But Villiers lived the life he had elected. He was poor, always poor, and poverty makes extraordinary bedfellows. But — his room-mates were the most intellectual spirits of modern France. If Baudelaire could not drop in on him at his dusty

lodgings, Richard Wagner would. And so there was talk — such talk — and there was that feeling of expansion, of liberation, which comes when a man like Turgenev could say to Flaubert: "Cheer up, old fellow! After all you are *Flaubert!*"

Villiers never forgot that he was Villiers. His pride, like his piety, was Luciferian. Nobly descended, he almost fought a duel with a distant cousin who doubted his birth. He claimed to spring from the ten times blue blood of a Grand Master of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, who defended Rhodes against the Turks in the time of Charles V. With this thought he often wandered into a café and had his absinthe charged on the slate of the ideal, the reckoning of which no true poet listeth.

A mystic among mystics, yet his linen was not always impeccable. Verlaine, another son of the stars and sewers, wrote, "I am far from sure that the philosophy of Villiers will not one day become the formula of our century." "Know, once and for all, that there is for thee no other universe than that conception which is reflected at the bottom of thy thoughts" — this utterance of Villiers is the keystone of his system. In Elën (1864), his greatest drama, another idea comes to the surface in the dialogue of Samuel and Goetze. Samuel speaks: "Science will not suffice. Sooner or later you will end by coming to your knees." Goetze: "Before what?" Samuel: "Before the darkness."

His life long, Villiers traversed the darkness which encompasses with the sure, swift step of a nyctalops, one who can pierce with his glance the deepest obscurity. So it is that in his plays and stories we are conscious of the great mystery of life and death hemming us about. Sometimes this atmosphere is morbidly oppressive, sometimes it is relieved by gay, maniacal bursts of laughter. Again it lifts and reveals the mild heavens streaked with menacing irony. There is a lugubrious undercurrent in the buffooneries of Villiers. Philip Hale has translated the cruel story of the swans massacred by fear. This poet slew his soul by his evocation of terror.

He is a mystic, a spiritual romantic, and only a realist in his sardonic pictures of Paris life, tiny cabinet pictures, etchings, bitten out with the *aqua fortis* of his ghastly irony. There is the irony, a mask behind which pity, sympathy, lurk; Shakespeare wore this mask at times. And there is the irony that withers, that blasts. This is Villiers.

Axël is both difficult and illuminative reading. It is in four acts with nine scenes. Each act or part is respectively entitled: The Religious World, The Tragic World, The Occult World, The Passional World. The poet had not known Wagner and his Tetralogy for naught. Sara is a superb creation—but not on the boards, in the disillusioning, depoetizing, troubled, and malarial air of the stage! It was a mistake to play Axël

in Paris. Its solemn act of rejection of life at the moment "when life becomes ideal" is hardly fitting for the theatre. A drama to be played by poets before a parterre of poets! Arthur Symons has noticed with his accustomed acuity that "the modern drama under the democratic influence of Ibsen, the positive influence of Dumas *fils*, has limited itself to the expression of temperaments in the one case, of theoretic intelligences in the other, in as nearly as possible the words which the average man would use for the statement of his emotions and ideas. The form, that is, is degraded below the level of the characters whom it attempts to express."

It is a point well taken, though I feel inclined to rebel at the pinning down of form to language alone. Ibsen's terseness — and remember we only see him in the cold light of Mr. Archer's translations — is one of his merits; but his form, his dramatic form, is not alone in his text, but in the serene and ordered procession of his dramatic action. Villiers is more poetically eloquent than the Ibsen of the prose dramas. But as logical or as dramatic — !

Mr. Symons adds, "La Révolte, which seems to anticipate A Doll's House, shows us an aristocratic Ibsen, touching reality with a certain disdain, certainly with far less skill, certainly with far more beauty." For me in a play of character the beauty that appeals is not purely verbal. It is the beauty of character *quâ* character, and the beauty of events marshalled

like a great sequence of mysterious music, humming with the indefinable harmonies of life. Ibsen makes this music; so does Gerhart Hauptmann. Axël is noble drama, despite its formal shortcoming, its dream-like quality. Many went begging to Villiers, and few came away empty-handed. Prodigal in genius, he was prodigal in giving.

This poet, like most poets, loathed mediocrity. He sought the exceptional, the complex soul. "A chacun son infini," he said; and in Axël he cries: "As for living, our servants will do that for us! As at the play in a central stall, one sits out so as not to disturb one's neighbours — out of courtesy, in a word — some play written in a wearisome style of which one does not like the subject, so I lived, out of politeness." Here is the gauge cast disdainfully to those who forever pelt us with sweet phrases about loving our neighbour, about altruism, sympathy, and social obligations — all the self-illuding, socialistic cant, in a word, that rankles in the breast of the solitary proud man and poisons the mind of the weak. Villiers is the exorcist of the real, the bearer of the ideal, wrote De Gourmont, himself a poetic individualist. And he sums up, "Villiers knew all forms of intellectual intoxication."

Villiers associated much with Richard Wagner, and with Baudelaire was an ardent upholder of the new music during the troubled times of the Tannhäuser *fiasco*. He played the piano,

knew the Ring by heart — no mean feat — and set Baudelaire's poems to music, anticipating Charles Martin Loeffler by nearly a half-century. Of one of them the music is said to be still extant. It is the poem with this couplet: —

> Our beds shall be scented with sweetest perfume,
> Our divans be as cool and dark as the tomb.

Probably the most lifelike, verbal portrait of Wagner is that of Villiers's. In a memorable passage, which I commend to Mr. Finck as testimony with which to snub recalcitrant clergymen and others, Villiers notes Wagner's violent disclaimer that his Parsifal was merely the work of the artist and not of the believing Christian. "Why, if I did not feel in my inmost soul the living light and love of that Christian faith, my works . . . would be the works of a liar and an ape. My art is my prayer." Thus Villiers reports Wagner — Wagner, whose marvellous soul changed colour every moment, like one of those exquisite flying fishes which paint the air and waters of the tropics.

In 1861, at Baudelaire's home, Villiers met Richard Wagner. It was at a period of great depression for that master. Villiers speaks of the interview as the most memorable of his life. "Wagner, with his high, remarkable forehead, almost terrifying in its development; his deep blue eyes, with their slow, steady, magnetic glance; his thin, strongly marked features, changing from one shade of pallor to another;

his imperious hooked nose; his delicate, thin-lipped, unsatisfied, ironic mouth; his exceedingly strong, projecting, and pointed chin — seemed to Villiers like the archangel of celestial combat." A rare little band, composed of Wagner, Villiers, Baudelaire, and Catulle Mendès, often walked the town after midnight. Once they were down along a dreary street which ends at the Quai Saint-Eustache, and there Wagner pointed out to them the window of a garret at the top of a very high house. In it he said he almost starved, despaired, even meditated suicide. Villiers was a Wagnerian among Wagnerians. He paraphrased in words his impressions of the German's music, and some of these were published in Catulle Mendès's *Revue Fantaisiste*. He visited Wagner at Triebchen, near Lucerne, in Switzerland, although he was so poor that he had to walk part of the distance.

One of Villiers's characters was Triboulat Bonhomet. This was the man who was so avid of new sensations in music that he cruelly slew swans. During the autumn of 1879 Villiers was at Bayreuth in company with Judith Gautier and Catulle Mendès, and gave a reading from his works before a lot of crowned heads, Wagner and Liszt included. He read some of the curious adventures of Bonhomet, and was surprised to hear his audience laugh, at first quietly, at last unrestrainedly. At last the tempest of laughter rose so high that the reader ceased and cast a glance full of vague suspicion round his

audience. The Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who sat beside him, touched his shoulder and pointed to a person sitting just opposite them. Villiers, with a little sharp cry, dropped the manuscript from his trembling fingers and gave evident signs of lively terror. There in front of him, surrounded by a bevy of beautiful women, gazing at him with shining eyes, his enormous mouth opened in stentorian laughter, his huge hands leading applause, was Dr. Triboulat Bonhomet himself, flesh and bone. It was Franz Liszt!

From the very first line of the manuscript, in which Villiers had minutely described the doctor, the whole audience had been struck by the resemblance between the great pianist and Triboulat Bonhomet, and as the description went on the likeness increased — dress, gestures, habits, all bore a striking similarity. One person alone did not perceive the identity, and he laughed louder than the rest — Liszt himself. Finally the reading had to be stopped on account of the general hilarity, but Liszt was never told of the joke.

The most curious episode in the life of Villiers was when he won a prize with his five-act play, The New World. A dramatic competition was announced by the theatrical press of Paris. A medal of honour and ten thousand francs were offered to the French dramatic author who would "most powerfully recall in a work of four or five acts the episode of the proclama-

tion of the independence of the United States, the hundredth anniversary of which fell on July 4, 1876. The two examining juries were composed as follows: the first, of the principal critics of the French theatrical press; the second, of Victor Hugo, honorary president; Emile Augier, Octave Feuillet, and Ernest Legouvé, members of the French Academy; Mr. Grenville Murray, representing the New York *Herald*, and M. Perrin, administrator-general of the Théâtre Français."

Villiers's play conquered. His New World was passed by both juries. But through some sort of official devilry he received neither money nor medal; nor was his play produced. He had the mortification of seeing a second-rate piece by Armand d'Artois given while his own work collected dust in the manuscript box of the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre. Naturally he raised a hubbub. He bearded the venerable Hugo at his home and there insulted not only the poet, but also the aged Legouvé. Conflict was the very breath of this visionary's nostrils. Did he not institute a ridiculous lawsuit against the author of a play because it vilified, so he claimed, a very remote ancestor? After interminable processes he was non-suited. And The New World was his favourite drama! Villiers had long dreamed of becoming the Richard Wagner of the drama.

His cousin says: "His idea was that the characteristics of the nation, or of the event

which was to be portrayed, should be imported into the framework of some personal intrigue, in which each individual of the *dramatis personæ* should personify in his language, attitude, or actions some one of the numerous elements produced by the friction of the incidents of the play." Here is the leading motive idea of Wagner — a dangerous idea in the drama, where the pattern must not be too regular or too persistent. Villiers dreamed of a symphonic drama with a densely woven web. Poets seldom realize the bigness of that hollow frame, the theatre, on the background of which they must paint in bold, splashing colours, or else pay the penalty of not being seen at all. It is scene, not miniature, painting which is the real art of the drama.

In sooth, The New World is a play that would puzzle the most sanguine manager. It has been called "one of the best constructed, deepest, and most passionate dramas of the present day," by a prejudiced witness, the cousin of the poet. Against the wishes of his true friends, Villiers allowed a representation, with dire results. Sarcey fairly peppered it with his wit; so bad were the actors and actresses that the author himself hissed furiously at every performance. This was at the Théâtre des Nations, 1883. There were six representations. And such an America as this poet depicts! It is as illusory, in another way, as Victor Hugo's England. Villiers had evidently read Châteaubriand's Atala — Châteaubriand, who cajoled his country-

men into the belief that he lived for years in Louisiana! — and so we are given some odd characters, odd happenings, odder history. Mistress Andrews, the heroine, is a sort of an American Melusina. Can any one in his most exalted mood picture an American Melusina?

And so this "hybrid, complex, contradictory being, by turns mysterious, terrible, cynical, innocent, loving, tragic, grotesque" poet, rolled down the hill of life. Is it not Pascal who says: "The last act is always tragedy, whatever fine comedy there may have been in the rest of life. We must all die alone"? Villiers was lonely and dying from his youth. Death was his intimate companion, sometimes a boon one, but oftener a consoling friend. The death's-head adorns his wassail time. Yet this poet actually went into politics, was a candidate at the elections of the *Conseil Général*, and was, luckily enough, defeated. One trembles at the idea of this aristocratic anarch among the bleating lawmakers. It is characteristic of him that he accepted his defeat calmly because his opponent was De Hérédia the poet. *Noblesse oblige!*

Villiers, like most European poets, had formed a mighty ideal of America and the Americans. He believed this country and its institutions to be what Thomas Paine, Jefferson, and a few other genuine patriots hoped it would be. He entertained for Thomas Edison the deepest admiration. His novel, a grotesque book, The Eve of the Future, contains a fanciful account

of Menlo Park and its "terrifying proprietor." When Edison went to the Paris exhibition in 1889 he became acquainted with Villiers's novel. He read it at a sitting and expressed himself thus: "That man is greater than I. I can only invent. He creates." He did not meet the author, who was mortally ill, though an attempt was made to bring the Frenchman and American together. The leading motive of The Eve of the Future, pushed to an ingenuity bordering on insanity, is the construction of an artificial woman which when wound up imitates in every respect the daily life of a cultivated lady!

J. K. Huysmans became known to Villiers, and his critical recognition of his genius, tardy though it was, was one of the few consolations accorded this unhappy man by fate. Huysmans it was who gently persuaded Villiers to make a deathbed marriage and legitimize his son. His agony was intensified by the fact that his wife could not sign her name to the marriage contract, she could only make a cross. The artist in this dying man persisted to the last. Huysmans with his omnivorous eye has noted the sigh that escaped from the semi-moribund poet.

Thus he lived, thus he died, a stranger in a strange world. His plays may be better appreciated some day. If Ibsen profited by The Revolt, then the seed of Villiers has not been sown in vain. Nothing reveals Ibsen's mastery of the dramatic form so completely as his treatment of the woman who revolts and leaves her home.

when compared to Villiers's handling of the same idea. Elizabeth goes away in despair, but to return. Nora departs, and the curtain quickly severs us from her future, her "miracle" speech being a faint prophecy that may be expanded some day into a fulfilment. Villiers was perhaps the pioneer; though revolting women abound in Dumas, abound in the Bible, for that matter; but the specific woman who puts up the shutters of the shop, and declares the dissolution of the matrimonial firm, is the creation of Villiers. Ibsen developed the idea, and, great artist that he is, made of it a formal drama of beauty and dramatic significance—which The Revolt is not. There are many loose psychologic ends left untied by the Frenchman, and his conclusion is dramatically ineffectual.

What is the value of such a life, what its meanings? may be asked by the curious impertinents. Why select for study the character and career of a half-mad mystic? Simply because Villiers is a poet and not a politician. It is because Villiers is Villiers that he interests the student of literature and humanity. And the bravery, the incomparable bravery, of the man who like Childe Roland blew his slug-horn, dauntless to the last! In his Azrael he uses as a motto Hassan-ben-Sabbah's "O Death! those who are about to live, salute thee." All the soul of Villiers de l'Isle Adam is in that magnificently defiant challenge!

XII

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

I

The dramatical evolution of Maurice Maeterlinck.

When this Belgian poet, dramatist, mystic, became known in America, his plays, avowedly written for marionettes, were received with open-eyed wonder or prolonged laughter. Any idea that he be taken seriously was scouted by serious critics, and the usual fate befell them — well-meaning amateurs seized them as legitimate prey. There is no denying the fact that at one time Maeterlinck meant for most people a crazy crow masquerading in tail feathers plucked from the Swan of Avon.

But caricature and critical malignity did not retard the growth of this very remarkable young man — he was born in 1862 — and presently we heard more of him. After we had finished The Treasure of the Lowly, Wisdom and Destiny, The Buried Temple, and The Double Garden, it was conceded that a mistake had been made just as in Browning's case. A mystic — yes, and one who had adjusted his very sensitive scheme

of thought to the practical work-a-day world. A Belgian Emerson, rather than a Belgian Shakespeare; but an Emerson who had in him much of Edgar Allan Poe. *Toujours* Poe, in any consideration of modern continental poets.

Maeterlinck began with a volume of poems entitled Serres Chaudes, often compared to the unrhymed, loose rhythmic prose of Walt Whitman. They do bear a certain superficial resemblance to Whitman's effusions, though not in idea. It is rather a cataloguing, aimless apparently, of widely disparate subjects. But the substance derives more from that extraordinary book of an extraordinary poet, Les Illuminations by Arthur Rimbaud, than from the ragged, epical lines of Whitman. Take, for example, the following specimen of Maeterlinck's *âme* in Serres Chaudes: —

"One day there was a poor little festival in the suburbs of my soul. They mowed the hemlock there one Sunday morning, and all the convent virgins saw the ships pass by on the canal one sunny fast day, while the swans suffered under a poisonous bridge. The trees were lopped about the prison; medicines were brought one afternoon in June and meals for the patients were spread over the whole horizon."

Now read Rimbaud, translated admirably by Aline Gorren: "As soon as the Idea of the Deluge had sunk back into its place, a rabbit halted amid the sainfoin and the small swing-

ing bells and said its prayers to the rainbow, through the spider's web. . . . The caravans started. And the splendid hotel was erected upon the chaos of ice and night at the Pole. . . . In hours of bitterness I imagine balls of sapphire, of metal. I am master of the silence. Why should the semblance of a vent-hole seem to pale up there at the corner of a vault?"

Both these hallucinations illustrate what Rémy de Gourmont would call disassociation of ideas.

Maeterlinck fervently studied the English dramatic classics. The result was wild ferment. In 1889 he published Princess Maleine, and such an impression did its whirling words create that Octave Mirbeau wrote his famous article in the Paris *Figaro*, August 24, 1890, in the course of which he made this statement, "M. Maurice Maeterlinck nous a donné l'œuvre la plus géniale de ce temps, et la plus extraordinaire et la plus naïve aussi, comparable et — oserai-je le dire? — supérieure en beauté à ce qu'il y a de plus beau dans Shakespeare . . . plus tragique que Macbeth, plus extraordinaire en pensée que Hamlet."

Either M. Mirbeau, who has often played the rôle of poet-anarchist, had not read Shakespeare reasonably, or else he was indulging in a pleasing mystification. Ah, that fatal *plus*, the uncritical overplus, how it does jump up from the page smiting the optics with rude humour! As a matter of sheer fact, Princess Maleine is an undi-

gested compound of Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, and, as Arthur Symons sagely remarks, with more of the Elizabethan violence we find in Webster and Tourneur than in Shakespeare. And its author was only a youth in his twenties.

However, with all its crudities, its imitations, its impossible *mélange* of blood, lust, tears, terror, there are several elements in the crazy play that indicate latent gifts of a high order. The range is narrow and Poe-like. Fear is the theme, and a strange repetition the method of expression. There is a young prince, a Hamlet, who has fed on the art of the modern decadents. He is a spiritual half-brother to Laforgue's Hamlet, shorn of that ironist's humour. Never could Prince Hjalmar of the Maeterlinck tragedy utter such a sublimely ironic soliloquy as Laforgue's, more Shakespearian than Shakespeare.

"Alas! poor Yorick! As one seems to hear, in one little shell, all the multitudinous roar of the ocean, so I here seem to perceive the whole quenchless symphony of the universal soul, of whose echoes this box was as the cross-roads. And do you imagine a human race that would look no farther, that would abide by this vaguely immortal sound, which one hears in a hollow skull, by way of explanation of death, by way of religion? . . . They also had their time, all these small folk of history; learning to read, paring their nails, illuminating the unsavoury lamp, loving every night, gormandizing, vain, crazy for compliments, kisses. . . . But yet—

no longer to be, no longer to be in it, no longer to be of it! Not even to be able to strain against one's human heart, any afternoon in the week, the melancholy of centuries compressed into one little chord upon the piano! . . ."

Maeterlinck's hero, too, is oppressed by the mystery of life. Throughout the drama the Fate of ancient tragedy marches remorselessly through the doomed palace of the king. Thanks to Maeterlinck, this Fate takes on a new countenance. A disquieting attack is made upon the nerves by the repercussive repetitions, the dense pall of melancholy hanging over the place. A madhouse is a cheerful place by comparison. One king has slain another and made a beggar outcast of the Princess royal, Maleine. She is loved by and loves Prince Hjalmar — an odd transposition of the sunny passions of Romeo and Juliet. The beggar girl becomes maid in the palace of her father's murderer. It is not a happy habitation. The old King is senile and debauched by Anne, Queen of Jutland. This miscreant, a hideous combination of Lady Macbeth, Messaline, and Phædra, has a daughter bearing the pretty name of Uglyane. Poor Uglyane! She is beautiful, unloved. The one assignation of her life is defeated by Maleine, who plays a cruel trick upon her. Going to the fountain — later we shall find that fountains assume important rôles in these plays — Maleine meets Hjalmar. Then we get the true Maeterlinck atmosphere. And this is where it may come from: —

I looked upon the scene before me — upon the mere house and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant, eye-like windows, upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees. . . . I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling and gazed down. . . . About the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity; an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn; a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Pestilent and mystic is the atmosphere of Princess Maleine. The quotation is from The Fall of the House of Usher. There is much of Poe's dark tarn, of Auber, and the misty mid-region of Weir in the early Maeterlinck.

The dénouement is horrible. Maleine is strangled by the Queen, who also loves Hjalmar, and to the accompaniment of a lunar eclipse, thunderbolts, a cyclone, meteors that explode, wounded swans that fall from stormy skies, this night of strange portents comes to an end after the prince avenges Maleine by stabbing the queen and killing himself. There is a dog that sniffs, scratches, and howls at the locked door of the murdered princess. Its name is Pluto. There are chanting and spectral nuns, lewd beggars, an old Shakespearian nurse, a freakish boy, and the usual scared courtiers. The scenes

do not hang together at all — there is no sequence of action, only of moods; or rather the same mood persists throughout. Yet the lines bite at times, and there are great fissures of silence, pauses as deep and as sinister as murky midnight pools.

These pauses are always pregnant, — like the pauses in strange pages of Schumann or those mysterious empty bars at the beginning of a Chopin tragedy in tone, — empty, forbidding vestibules to woful edifices.

"There is a little kitchen maid's soul at the bottom of her green eyes;" "I am sick to die of it one of those twenty thousand nights we have to live;" "How dark? how dark? Is a forest lit up like a ball room?" "The poor never know anything;" "Will she not have a little silence in her heart?" "She is as cold as an earthworm;" "Oh! look, look at their eyes. They will leap out upon me like frogs;" "My God! My God! She is waiting now on the wharves of hell;" "How unhappy the dead look!" These and many more, with gasps and ejaculations, make up a dialogue that is at least original, though bizarre. Naturally it is all the fruit of green, immature genius.

The ideas, hysterical and few as they are, begin to assume some coherence if compared with the emotional and disconnected experiments of the poems.

Maeterlinck has defined his æsthetic in his prose essays. He played queer pranks upon

the nerves with these shadows, these spiritual marionettes, which are pure abstractions typifying various qualities of the temperament. The iteration of his speech is like the dripping of water upon the heads of the condemned. It finally stuns the consciousness, and then, like a performer upon some fantastic instrument with one string, this virtuoso executes variations boasting a solitary theme — the fear of Fear.

Speech, says Maeterlinck, is never the medium of communication of real and inmost thoughts. Silence alone can transmit them from soul to soul. We talk to fill up the blanks of life. Silence is so truth-telling, so illuminative, that few have the courage to face it. Mankind fears silence more than the dark. (Poe again; Silence.) The most illuminating silence of all, the most irresistible, is the Silence of Death. It is the unspoken word that reveals our inner self. "We do not know each other; we have not yet dared to be silent together." Modern thought and literature lack this mystic element, lack the atmosphere of the spiritual, perfect as is its technic and its intellectual equipment. The Russians have it in their fiction — a fiction of epilepsy and burning spiritual crises. The Middle Ages had it. Men stood nearer to nature, to God. They understood children, women, animals, plants, inanimate objects, with greater tenderness and greater depth. "The statues and paintings they have left us may not be perfect, but a mysterious power and secret

charm that I cannot define are imprisoned within them, and bestow upon them perpetual youth. Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, are filled with the mysterious chant of the infinite, the threatening silence of souls and of gods, eternity thundering on the horizon, fate and fatality perceived interiorly without any one being able to say by what signs they have been recognized."

Here we recognize the true mystic, the feeder upon the writings of Emerson, Novalis, the Admirable Ruysbroeck; Plato, Plotinus, St. Bernard, Jacob Boehme, and Coleridge. And while he achieves astonishing flights into the blue, he always returns to mother earth. There is spiritual lift in his words, — lift and ofttimes intoxication. Generations of Flemish ancestors have dowered this young thinker with solid nerves and a saner intellectual apparatus than his early critics imagined. And he never exhibits what old Chaucer called "the spiced conscience." Neither hell's flames nor the joys of heaven appear in his pages. He preaches only of man and the soul of man.

Without the mystery of life, life is not worth the living. The static opposed to the dynamic theatre is his ideal mood, not action; the immaterial, not the obvious. Hamlet is not awake — at every moment does he advance to the very brink of awakening. The mysterious chant of the Infinite, the ominous silence of the soul and of God, the murmur of Eternity on the horizon, the destiny or fatality that we are conscious

within us, though by what tokens none may tell — do not all these underlie King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet? Are there not elements of deeper gravity and stability in happiness in a single moment of repose than in the whirlwind of passion? Does the soul only flower on nights of storm? "But to the tragic author, as to the mediocre painter who still lingers over historical pictures, it is only the violence of the anecdote that appeals . . . whereas it is far away from bloodshed, battle-cry, and sword thrust that the lives of most of us flow on, and men's tears are silent to-day, and invisible, and almost spiritual."

Maeterlinck goes to the modern theatre and feels as if he had spent a few hours with his ancestors, who conceived life as something that was primitive, arid, and brutal. He sees murder, hears of deceived husbands and wives instead of being shown some act of life "traced back to its sources and to its mystery by connecting links." He yearns for one of the strange moments of a higher life that flit unperceived through his dreariest hours. "Othello does not appear to live the august daily life of Hamlet, who has the time to live, inasmuch as he does not act. Othello is admirably jealous. But is it not perhaps an ancient error to imagine that it is at the moment when this passion, or others of equal violence, possess us that we live our truest lives? I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his arm-chair, waiting patiently with his lamp beside him; giving un-

conscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about the house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny — an old man, who conceives not that all the powers of this world, like so many heedful servants, are mingling and keeping vigil in his room, who suspects not that the very sun is supporting in space the little table against which he leans or that every star in heaven and every fibre of the soul are directly concerned in the movement of an eyelid that closes, or a thought that springs to birth — I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who avenges his honour."

This excerpt (translated by Alfred Sutro) shows the real Maeterlinck, the man whose mind is imbued by the strangeness of common life, the mystic correspondences, the star in the grain of wheat. The philosophy is akin to certain passages executed in the allegoric pictures of Albrecht Dürer, William Blake, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones.

Each century, he argues, has its own near sorrow. It is well that we should sally forth in search of our sorrows — the value of ourselves is but the value of our melancholy and disquiets. The tragic masterpieces of the past

are inferior in the quality of their sorrow compared to the sorrows of to-day. To-day it is fatality that we challenge; and this is perhaps the distinguishing note of the new theatre. It is no longer the effects of disaster that arrest our attention; it is disaster itself; and we are eager to know its essence and its laws. It is the rallying point of the most recent dramas, the centre of light with strange flames gleaming, about which revolve the souls of women and men. And a step has been taken toward the mystery so that life's mysteries may be looked in the face. Between past and future man ("What is man but a god who is afraid?") stands trembling on the tiny oasis of the present. It is the disaster of our existence that we fear our soul; did we but allow it to smile frankly in its silence and its radiance, we should be already living an eternal life. O for those "reservoirs of certitudes" on the other side of night, "whither the silent herd of souls flock every morning to slake their thirst."

"To every man there come noble thoughts that pass his heart like great white birds." Then is recalled Browning and his similitude of the meanest soul that has its better side to show its love. "In life there is no creature so degraded but knows full well which is the noble and beautiful thing he must do." A life perceived is a life transformed. To love one's self is to love thy neighbour in thyself! Maeterlinck's attitude toward woman — the true

touchstone of philosopher, poet, priest, and artist — is beautiful. "I have never met a single woman who did not bring to me something that was great."

The spiritual renascence may be at hand. It is the theatre that last feels its approach. Poetry, painting, sculpture, music, all have met it halfway; only the stage lags in the rear. Plot, action, trickeries, cheap illusions, must be swept away into the limbo of things used up. Atmosphere, the atmosphere of unuttered emotions, arrested attitudes, ideas of the spiritual subconscious, are to usurp the mechanical formulas of to-day. The ideal is music — music, the archetype of the arts. (Walter Pater preached this platonic doctrine.) "It is only the words that at first sight seem useless that really count in a work." But to realize, to exteriorize the mystery, the significance of the soul life, what a strange and symbolic web must be woven by the poet-dramatist! He must break with the conventions of the past and create something that is not quite painting, not quite drama, something that is more than poetry, less than music — full of ecstasies, silent joys, luminous pauses, and the burning fever of the soul that sometimes slays.

It is very beautiful, very ideal — bard, poet, mystic, moralist, and playwright, that Maeterlinck dared to become. He practised *before* he preached — unlike most men; and he had the slow fortitude of the brave. We know now that

artistically he springs from the loins of Poe and Hoffmann; that Villiers de l'Isle Adam was his spiritual godfather; that by the Belgian's artful scale of words he evoked images in our mind which recall the harmonies of unheard music; that the union of mysticism and freedom of thinking lends to his work peculiar eloquence; that his device is "Within me there is more," a mediæval inscription borrowed from an old doorway in Bruges. He is more revolutionary than Ibsen in the matter of technic. Maeterlinck writes a play about an open door, a closed window, or the vague and disheartening twilights of cloudy gardens. That he is quite sane in his early work we must not assert — since when shall art and sanity be driven in easy harness?

In giving a bare abstract of Maeterlinck's theories, spiritual and æsthetic, their beauty and nobility, we but clear the way for a better, because wider, appreciation of the plays. Let us consider them all from The Intruder to Monna Vanna and Joyzelle.

II

"By mysticism we mean, not the extravagance of an erring fancy, but the concentration of reason in feeling, the enthusiastic love of the good, the true, the one, the sense of the infinity of knowledge, and of the marvel of the human faculties. When feeding upon such thoughts

the 'wing of the soul is renewed and gains strength, she is raised above the manikins of earth' and their opinions, waiting in wonder to know and working with reverence to find out what God in this or in another life may reveal to her."

This is not from Maurice Maeterlinck; it was written by a hard-headed man and lovable teacher, the late Benjamin Jowett, the famous Master of Balliol. Not intended as a text, but merely to show that the lift of spirit, which is the sign manual of mysticism, does not prelude the practical. It is a fresh visual angle from which are viewed the things of heaven and earthly things.

In his youth, possibly to escape the sterilities of the code — for he was an advocate by profession — Maeterlinck took up the mystic writers though the drama pulled him hard, as it ever does with the preëlected. Little danger of this ardent young man weighing, as do many, the theatre in the scales of commerce. As with Ibsen, the stage was an escape for Maeterlinck; it liberated ideas, poetic, dramatic, mystic, which had become intolerable, ideas which turned his brain. That art of which Pinero so eloquently writes, "The great, the fascinating, and most difficult art, . . . compression of life without falsification," could never have signified a gold mine for Maeterlinck as it did for Robert Louis Stevenson. To the Belgian it was not a speculation, but a consecration. To it he brought that "concentration of thought and sustained

intensity" which Pinero deems imperative in the curriculum of a dramatic artist.

Upon the anvil of his youthful dreams did Maeterlinck forge his little plays for marionettes. Shadowy they are, brief transcripts of emotion, but valuable in illustrating unity of purpose, of mood, of *tone*. Herein lies their superiority to Browning's more elaborate structures. Before he ventured into the maze of plotting, Maeterlinck was content with simple types of construction. The lyric musician in this poet, the lover of beauty, led him to make his formula a musical one. The dialogue of the first plays seems like new species of musical notation. If there is not rhyme there is rhythm, interior rhythm, and an alluring assonance. Hence we get pages burdened with repetitions and also the "crossing fire" of jewelled words. Apart from their spirit the lines of this poet are sonorously beautiful. In the "purple" mists of his early manner a weaker man might have perished. Not so Maeterlinck. He is first the thinker — a thinker of strange thoughts independent of their verbal settings. He soon escaped preciosity in diction; it was monotony of mood that chained him to his many experimentings.

And therein the old ghost of the Romantics comes to life asserting its "claims of the ideal," as Ibsen has the phrase. Crushed to dust by the hammers of the realists, sneered at in the bitter-sweet epigrams of Heine, Romance returns to us wearing a new mask. We name this mask

Symbolism; but joyous, incarnate behind its shifting shapes, marches Romance, the Romance of 1830, the Romance of — Before the Deluge. The earth-men, the Troglodytes, who went delving into moral sewers and backyards of humanity, ruled for a decade and a day; then the vanquished reconquered. In this cycle of art it is Romance that comes to us more often, remains longer when it does come.

Maurice Maeterlinck employs the symbol instead of the sword; the psyche is his *panache*. His puppets are all poetic — the same poetry as of eld informs their gestures and their speech. He so fashions them of such fragile pure stuff that a phrase maladministered acts as the thrust of a dagger. The Idea of Death slays: the blind see; bodies die, but the soul persists; voices of expiring lovers float through vast and shadowy corridors — as in Alladine and Palomides — children speak as if their lips had been touched by the burning coal of prophecy; their souls are laid bare with a cruel pity; love is strangled by a hair; we see Death stalk in the interior of a quiet home, or rather *feel* than see; or in our ears is whispered a terrible and sweet tale of the Death of Tintagiles — it is all moonlight music, mystery with a nightmare *finale;* or a tender original soul is crushed by the sheer impact of a great love hovering near it — Aglavaine and Sélysette. Then we get fantasy and miracle play, librettos, full of charm, wonder, and delicious irony. Maeterlinck recalls life, beckons to life, and in

Monna Vanna smashes the stained-glass splendours hemming him in from the world; and behold — we are given drama, see the shock of character, and feel the mailed hand of a warrior-dramatist. In a dozen years he has traversed a kingdom, has grown from *wunderkind* to mature artist, from a poet of few moods to a maker of viable drama.

The chronology of the Maeterlinckian dramatic works is this: Princess Maleine (1889); The Intruder, The Blind (1890); The Seven Princesses (1891); Pelléas and Mélisande (1892); Alladine and Palomides, Interior, The Death of Tintagiles (1894); Aglavaine and Sélysette (1896); Ariane and Barbe-Bleu, Sister Beatrice (1901); Monna Vanna (1902); Joyzelle (1903).

Though the first attempts are emotional presentations of ideas, though the dramatic form is, from a Scribe standpoint, amateurish, yet the unmistakable *flair* of the born dramatist is present. In the beginning Maeterlinck elected to mould poetic moods; later on we shall see him a moulder of men and women.

A thinker may view the visible universe as a symbol, as the garment wherewith the gods conceal themselves; this Goethe did. Or this globe, upon the round of which move sorrowful creatures whirled through space from an unthinkable past to an unthinkable future, may be apprehended as a phantasmagoria, shot through with misery, a cage of dreams, a prison wherein the echoes of what has been thought and done

meet in cruel confluence within the walls of the human brain. All pessimistic cosmogonists, poets, dramatists, dwell, with the obsession of an *idée fixe*, upon this scheme of things terrestrial. And then there is De Maupassant, an *eye*, which photographed the salient profiles of his fellow-beings; or Poe, who, suffering from an incurable disease, felt the horror of the pulse-beat, the hideous drama of mere sentience. Charles Darwin, with pitiless objectivity, displays a map of life whereon the struggle is eternal — a struggle from protoplasm to Super-Man (the latter a mad idea in a poet's skull). Carlyle thunders at the Sons of Belial and we shrivel up in the fiery furnace of his eloquent wrath; or John Henry Newman wooes us to God with beautiful, gentle speech. To every man his illusion. Maeterlinck's is the apprehension of the helplessness of mankind, though not its hopelessness. His optimism, the germ of which is in the poems, has grown steadily with the years. And the tinge of pessimism, of morbidity, in his earlier productions has vanished in the dialectic of his prose.

Maeterlinck first saw his drama as music — this is a contradiction in terms, but it best expresses the meaning intended. As in music there are ebb and flow, rhythmic pulse, so his little landscapes unroll themselves with iteration to the accompaniment of mournful voices. No dramatist, ancient or modern, so depends upon vocal *timbre* to embody his dreams as this

one. In reality his characters are voice or nothing. From the deeps of haunted gardens come these muffled voices, voices suffocated by sorrow, poignant voices and sinister. Allusion has been made to the Poe-like machinery of Maeterlinck — atmosphere. It is, however, only external. He works quite differently from Poe, and the *dekoration* with its dreamy forests, skies lowering or resonant with sunshine, parks and fountains, stretch of sea and dreary moats, is but a background for his moods. He pushes much farther than Ibsen and Wagner the rhythmic correspondences of man and his artistic environment. But the voice dominates his drama, the human voice with all its varied intonations, its wealth of subtle *nuance*.

Instead of the idea-complexity we find in Browning, in Maeterlinck the single motif is elaborated. He is not polyphonic, — to borrow a musical metaphor, — but monophonic. Where he is a psychologist of the most modern stamp lies in his perception of the fact that there is no longer an autonomous *I*, the human ego is an orchestra of collective egos. *We*, not *I*, is the burden of our consciousness. Through countless ages the vast chemistry of the Eternal retort has created a bubble, an atom, which says *I* to itself in daylight, when looking in mirrors, but in the dark when the inutile noise of life is ceased then the *I* becomes a multitudinous *We*. All the head hums with repercussive memories of anterior existences.

Some call it dreaming; others nerve-memory; others again — recollection of anterior life.

Other dramatists have hinted this pantheism before Maeterlinck. Shakespeare was a symbolist; so was Ibsen when he penned his The Master Builder. But the younger man makes a formula of the idea. His is the dramaturgy of the subconscious. His people say things and thereby reveal their multiple personalities, even the colour of their souls. Here, then, is the symbolist. To put the case more clearly, let Aline Gorren be heard, — a writer who is imbued with the beauty of symbolic ideas: —

"Your documents, details, verified facts, are precisely the least worth considering," says, in effect, the Symbolist. "They are appearances; impalpable shadows of clouds. Nothing ye think to see is what it seems." Nothing outside of our representation exists. All visibilities are symbols. Our business is to find out what these symbols are. Any book that does not directly concern itself with the hints concealed beneath the diversified masks and aspects of matter is a house built out of a boy's toy blocks. Science, after promising more things than it could fulfil, has many hypotheses just now that float about one central idea — the existence of one essence, infinite in moods, by reference to which alone anything whatsoever can be understood. Those of our creed only and solely have a philosophic basis for their art.

Emil Verhaeren, Belgian mystic, anarchist, poet, sings of The Forest of Numbers in his hate-saturated chants, Les Flambeaux Noirs.

Je suis l'halluciné de la forêt des Nombres.

And was not the greatest mystic of all one who saw the image in the fiery bush, one who, "in the midway of this our mortal life," found himself in a gloomy wood astray — was not Dante a supreme symbolist? Life for a man of Maeterlinck's temperament is ever a "forest of numbers"; with its strange arithmetic he hallucinates himself. What is The Intruder but a symbol, and one that has enchained the attention of man from before the time when the Brachycephalic and the Dolichocephalic waged war with the cave-bear and murder was celebrated in tribal lays? Through the ages Death, either as a shadowy obstruction or a skeleton with scythe and hour-glass, has marched ahead of men. Epic and anecdote, canvas and composition, have celebrated his ineluctible victories. Why then call Maeterlinck morbid for embroidering the *macabre*, fascinating theme with new variations!

Death the Intruder! Always the Intruder. In his first little dramatic *plaque*, it is the venerable grandfather who is clairvoyant: Death, protagonist. Almost imperceptibly the shadow steals into the room with the lighted lamp and big Dutch clock. The spiritual evidence is cumulative; a series of cunningly worded affirmations, and lo! Death the Intruder. It is a revelation of the technic of atmosphere. Voice again is the chief character.

The Blind takes us out of doors, though one senses the atmosphere of the charnel-house under the blue bowl of the unvarying sky. This is the most familiar and the most derided of the Maeterlinckian plays. It is hardly necessary to describe that "ancient Nordland forest," with its "eternal look under a sky of deep stars." The stage directions of these poems are matchless. How depict an "eternal look"? These exalted pictures are but the verbal instrumentation of Maeterlinck's motives. They may be imagined, never realized. Yet how the settings enhance the theme! These blind old men and women, with the lame, the halt, the mad and the sad, form a painful tableau in the centre of which sits the dead priest, their keeper, their leader, without whom they are destined to stumble into the slow waters about the island.

Death the Intruder! But in this instance an intruder who has sneaked in unperceived. The discovery is made in semi-tones that mount solemnly to the apex of a pyramid of woe. This little drama is more "arranged" than The Intruder; it does not "happen" so inevitably. Interior, called Home by the English translator, the lamented poet Richard Hovey, is of similar *genre* to The Intruder. From a coign in an old garden planted with willows we see a window — a symbol; through this window the family may be viewed. Its members are seated. All is vague, dreamy. The dialogue occurs without. An old man and a stranger discuss

the garden, the family and — the catastrophe. Most skilfully the poet marshals his facts — hints, pauses, sighs, are the actors in the curious puppet-booth. One phrase occurs that is the purest Maeterlinck: —

"Take care," says the old man; "we do not know how far the soul extends about men. . . ." The dénouement is touching.

From Holbein to Saint-Saëns art shows a procession of dancing Deaths — always dancing with bare bones that creak triumphantly. In Maeterlinck's mimings there is something of the spirit of Walt Whitman's threnody.

The Belgian translates the idea of Death into phrases more hypnotic than Whitman's. His "cool-enfolding Death" is not always "lovely and soothing" for the survivors. His cast of mind is mediæval, and presently comes sailing into the critical consciousness memories of the Pre-Raphaelitic Brotherhood with its strained attitudes, its glories of illuminated glass, its breathless intensity and concentration upon a single theme — above all its apotheosis of the symbol and of Death the Intruder. It is one more link in the development of our young dramatist. He knew Poe and Emerson; he appreciated Rossetti both as poet and painter. In the next group of plays under consideration a step nearer life may be noted, a stronger element of romance betrays itself. We are approaching, though deliberately, Maeterlinck, the Romantic.

III

Israel Zangwill told a story once about Maeterlinck that is curious even if not true. He said the Belgian poet, when a young fellow, was on one of his nocturnal prowls, and while sitting in a café overheard a man explain a new dramatic technic to his friend. In it was the germ of the Maeterlinck plays. Possibly the plays for marionettes, Les Flaireurs, of Charles van Lerberghe were a starting-point. The growth of the poet on the technical side, as well as the evolution from vague, even nebulous thinking to the calm, solid philosophy of Wisdom and Destiny, is set before us in the order of his composition. Nor is a laconic dialogue so amazingly new. Dumas employed it, and also Hugo.

The romantic in Maeterlinck began to show itself plainly in The Seven Princesses. Death is still the motive, but the picture is ampler, the frame more decorative. Presently we shall see meads and forests, maidens in distress, fountains and lonely knights. Movement, though it be a mere sinister rustling of dead leaves, is more manifest in this transitional period. The Seven Princesses is like some ancient morality, with the nervous, sonorous, musical setting of a latter-day composer. It has a spacious hall of marble, with a flight of seven white marble steps; there are seven sleeping maidens; a silver lamp sheds its mysterious glow upon the seven of mystic

number (the poet unconsciously recalls those other seven sleepers of the early chroniclers), and the landscape without the palace — through the windows of the terrace is seen the setting sun; the country is dark, marshy, and between the huge willows a gloomy canal stretches to the horizon. Upon its stagnant waters a man-of-war slowly moves. The old King and Queen in the terrace note its approach. Here we have a prologue full of atmosphere, an enigmatic story awaiting its solution.

We learn from the disjointed dialogue that the Prince, the heir apparent, is expected. He comes upon the ship. He is welcomed by the aged couple — "people are too old without knowing it," says the Queen — and the ship leaves. Its departure is managed poetically. The far-away voices of the sailors are heard in monotonous song: "The Atlantic, the Atlantic," evokes a feeling of the remote which we feel when Vanderdecken's vessel vanishes in The Flying Dutchman. This refrain of "The Atlantic, the Atlantic, we shall return no more, the Atlantic," sets vibrating certain chords of melancholy. In the meantime the Prince has been regarding the sleepers through the glass windows. The Queen, whose premonitions of approaching evil are quite Maeterlinckian, points out the beautiful girls, names them. The most beautiful of all is Ursula. The Prince notices that this Princess does not sleep like her sisters. "She is holding one of her hands

strangely, . . ." he remarks. "Why has she not bound up her hair?" asks the Queen, distractedly. Gradually the little evidences accumulate. Something is wrong below, there in the great hall, where breathlessly sleep the seven Princesses on the cushions of pale silk strewn upon the marble steps.

The Prince, after trying to force the window, goes through a secret passage and reaches the sleepers. The action is supplied by the Queen at the window above. She weeps, she beats the glass, she says frantic things in the gloom to the old King. "Seven little open mouths! . . . Oh, I am sure they are thirsty," she cries. The Prince awakens the Princesses — all save one. Ursula lies singularly still. "She is not asleep! She is not asleep!" screams the frantic Queen. There is a hurrying to and fro of servitors with torches. "Open, open," is the piteous plaint of the old woman. Beyond, in the night, is heard the chant of the seamen as they fade away into the darkness. "The Atlantic, the Atlantic, we shall return no more."

What does it all mean? What is the hidden symbol? The scene suggests Holland; yet it is no man's land. These dolorous people with burning eyes and agitated, feverish gestures — who are they? Poets all. Despite the decoration, despite the skilful handling of the element of suspense, this little fantasy is not for the footlights. It is too literary. There is mastery revealed in the dialogue. The entire piece

recalls a wan Burne-Jones picture with the symphonic accompaniment of Claude Debussy.

Perhaps it is well that a dramatist is more chained to the planet than his brethren, the poet, composer, *prosateur*. Like the sculptor and the architect, the dramatic poet must deal with forms that can be apprehended by the world. All art is a convention in the last analysis; theatrical art contains more conventions than the rest. Men of an original cast of mind revolt at the checks imposed upon their imagination by the theatre. But Shakespeare submitted to them and, a lesser man, Maeterlinck, has had to suffer the pangs of defeat. But he has left his imprint upon the page of the French drama in his disregard of the stage carpentry of Scribe and Sardou. Above all, he has imparted to the contemporaneous theatre new poetic ideas. A new technic — on the material side — is of less importance than the introduction of new modes of expression, of atmosphere, of ideas.

Maeterlinck, after his early essays in a domain that is more poetical than dramatic, we find longing for the romantic. He tires of single figures painted upon a small canvas. (Faguet once called him the "Henner of literature.") He longs for more space, more characters, more action — in a word — variety. We get it in his next attempt, Alladine and Palomides. In it there is less music, but more action — withal, it is naïvely childish. Alladine is loved by Ablamore. He is an old king, reigning over a castle

surrounded by crazy moats. His beloved is very young. When the knightly Palomides appears, they mutually love. The King is a philosopher. Listen: "Now I have recognized that misfortune itself is of better worth than sleep, and that there must be a life more active and higher than waiting. . . ." There is an avenue of fountains that unfolds before the windows — wonderful, weariless. Ablamore interrogates Alladine after she has encountered Palomides. Does she regard the weariless fountains alone? He soon lays bare the child soul of this maiden. Ablamore wishes Palomides to marry his daughter Astolaine. He goes mad with jealousy and casts the lovers into a dungeon, a trick dungeon, where marvels occur: a sea that is a sky, moveless flowers. The pair embrace. Death is nigh — "there is no kissing twice upon the heart of death." Finally they are engulfed. Rescued, they die in separate chambers of the palace, from which the aged King has fled. Voices are the only actors in the last scene.

Mediæval, too, in its picturesque quality is The Death of Tintagiles with its five short acts of despairing sister love. The little Tintagiles is the king that is to be. His grandmother, a demented old woman, suffers from a mania which takes the form of aggressive jealousy. She is ancient on her throne — in what strange land does she reign? — and she seeks to assassinate the poor little boy. Ygraine and Bellangère, his sisters, thwart her desires for a time — but

only for a short time. He is eventually kidnapped and murdered. This simple, old-world fairy story — all Maeterlinck has a tang of the supernatural — is treated exquisitely. The arousing of pity for the doomed child is almost Shakespearian. These children of Maeterlinck are his own creation. No one, with the exception of Dostoïevsky and Hauptmann, approaches him in unfolding the artless secrets of the childish heart. Like plucked petals of a white virginal flower, the little soul is exposed. And there is no taint of precocious sexuality as in Dostoïevsky's studies of childhood (Les Précoces and others). Hauptmann's Hannele, among modern figures of girlhood, alone matches the Belgian. Hannele is nearer the soil than Tintagiles or the little Yniold.

"There seems to be a watch set for the approach of the slightest happiness," laments Ygraine as she holds Tintagiles by the hand. They live in a tower that stands in an amphitheatre of shadows. It is in the valley. The air does not seem to go down so low. The walls of the tower are cracking. "You would say it was dissolving in the shadows." There the grandmother Queen resides. "They say she is not beautiful and that she is growing huge." There is something monstrous in this hint of her size — as though a black, dropsical spider sat in the dark weaving the murderous webs for passing flies. Only the fly in this case is her grandson. Into the "sickening castle" go the

"little sad King" and his sisters. Bellangère relates that smothered voices reached her in one of the strange corridors. They spoke of a child and a crown of gold. She did not understand, "for it was hard to hear, and their voices were sweet." Enough, however, to put the sisters on their guard.

In their sleeping room they bar the doors. An old retainer is with them. At the end of the act a door is slowly pushed open. They exert all their force to keep it closed. The old man puts his sword through the opening; it snaps. The room grows colder as the door, worked by unseen means, opens. Then Tintagiles utters a piercing cry. The door closes. They are saved — for a time. Act IV gives us the corridor in front of the room wherein hide the boy and his sisters. The handmaids of the vile old Queen chatter. It is near midnight. Sleep has overtaken the hapless victims. The handmaids steal Tintagiles, and the scene ends in screams. But the last act gives us sensations of the direst sort, because its terrors are felt and not seen. It is nearly all monologue. Only an actress of superior tragic power could do justice to this intense episode. A great iron door is seen. Ygraine, haggard, dishevelled, enters, lamp in hand. She has tracked her darling to this awful spot. "I found all these golden curls along the steps and along the walls; and I followed them. I picked them up. . . . Oh! oh! They are very beautiful. . . . They say the

shadows poison. . . . Ah! Still more golden curls shut in the door. . . . Tintagiles!"

Then a tiny knock is heard — the bruised fists of Tintagiles on the other side of the massive door. "Sister Ygraine, sister Ygraine," he calls. He tells her he escaped from the monster. He struck her — struck her! Poe-like he exclaims, "Open quickly . . . for the love of dear God, sister Ygraine." You feel the hideous woman approaching. "She is breathing behind me," moans the child as the fat, panting devil reaches him, an obscene shape of terror. "She . . . is taking me by the throat. . . ." Ygraine, frantic, without, hears the fall of a little body and bursts into despairing invectives. "Let me be punished some other way. . . . There are so many things that could give me more pain . . . if thou lovest to give pain."

I confess that the condensed bitterness and woe and cruelty of this last act border on the pathologic if we do not consider the symbol. I would rather hear the beautiful symphonic poem of Charles Martin Loeffler based upon the poetic impressions of this piece — the art of music gives us the "pathos of distance." Yet Maeterlinck's Death of Tintagiles is in form and style far above his previous efforts. His marionettes are beginning to modulate into flesh and blood, and, like the mermaid of the fairy story, the transformation is a painful one.

We note this modulation particularly in Pelléas and Mélisande. First played in English by

Forbes Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the play made a mixed impression in London; though it may be confessed that, despite the scenic splendour, the translation and the acting transposed to a lower, realistic key this lovely drama of souls. There is no play of Maeterlinck's so saturated in poesy, so replete with romance. The romantic in Maeterlinck has here full sway. There are episodes as intense as the second act of Tristan and Isolde. One expects to hear King Marke's distant, tremulous hunting horns in the forest scene of the fourth act, where Pelléas and Mélisande uncover their secret.

The plot is not a densely woven one. In the woods while hunting in a land east of the sun and west of the moon, Golaud, a king's son, comes upon Mélisande sitting disconsolate at the brink of a spring. She is timid and would flee. Something has happened to her which she does not explain, perhaps remember. She is lost, she declares, with the passionate iteration which has become a fixed pattern in the Maeterlinck dialogue. She has dropped into the pool the gold crown some one gave her — who it was she never tells. A forlorn little princess out of a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale. Golaud marries her offhand and brings her to his home, the castle of his grandfather, Arkël, King of Allemonde. There his father lies dying — we never see this shadowy invalid — and his brother Pelléas lives. Also Little

Yniold, son of Golaud, by a former marriage. The castle is malarial, rickety, like many of Maeterlinck's buildings. Nearly all his people seem to suffer from swampy emanations or the mephitic gas of ancient dungeons. The evil odours of Arkël's abode are even alluded to in this play.

Pelléas and Mélisande love. Golaud suspects it, and his jealousy, mixing with his love for brother and wife, is delineated masterfully. We now begin to see the fruits of the dramatist's careful study of moods. Evanescent as are the moods of the previous plays, they served as spiritual gymnastics. With them he proved his ability to portray the finer shades of terror, remorse, love, despair. In the jealousy of Golaud he takes a step nearer the concrete. Golaud is a hunter, a man whose temples are touched by gray. He adores his child-wife and trusts her. He begs the moody Pelléas to wait upon her. His marriage with her has surprised all, save his grandfather. Arkël says: —

"He has done what he probably must have done. I am very old, and nevertheless I have not yet seen clearly for one moment into myself; how would you that I judge what others have done?" A wonderful man, indeed. Pelléas wishes to visit his dying friend Marcellus — the Shakespeare nomenclature persists — but Arkël begs him to stay at home, where death approaches.

Mélisande is well received by the King and

Queen. She is astonished at the gloom of the gardens, and is pleased with the spectacle of the sea. In the ending of Act I we get a faint premonition of disaster. Pelléas and Mélisande watch the departure of the ship that brought Mélisande. (Maeterlinck here borrows an early effect from The Seven Princesses.) It flies away under full sail.

Pelléas. Nothing can be seen any longer on the sea. . . .

Mélisande. I see more lights.

Pelléas. It is the other lighthouses. . . . Do you hear the sea? It is the wind rising. Let us go down this way. Will you give me your hand?

Mélisande. See, see, my hands are full.

Pelléas. I will hold you by the arm; the road is steep and it is very gloomy there. . . . I am going away, perhaps, to-morrow. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! . . . Why do you go away?

[*Curtain.*

Much sport has been made of the first scene in this play. Yet it only displays the poet's worship of Shakespeare. Maid-servants are discovered at the castle gate. They gabble as they knock for admission. It is as prosaic as the rest of the work is poetic. A porter of the "Anon, anon, I come" type holds parley. He is borrowed from Macbeth. However, it does not demand a close reading of this episode to discover that it sounds the keynote to music — always symbolical — of the drama that follows.

IV

The second act of Pelléas and Mélisande begins at an immemorial fountain in the royal park. Here the young Prince sits with the wife of his brother. Mélisande is one of the poet's most successful full-length portraits. She is exquisitely girlish, is charming with her strange Undine airs, and is touched by a singular atmosphere of the remote. Hauptmann has realized the same ethereal type in Rautendelein. Mélisande is very romantic. At times she is on the point of melting into the green tapestry of the forest. She is a woodland creature. More melancholy than Miranda, she is not without traces of her high-bred temperament; less real than Juliet, she seems quite as passion-smitten. Not altogether a comprehensible creation, Mélisande piques one at every reading, with her waywardness, her infantile change of moods.

At the spring the two converse of the water and its healing powers — "You would say that my hands were sick to-day," she murmurs as she dips her hand into the pool. She loses her wedding ring. The conversation is all as indirect, as elliptical, as Robert Browning or Henry James. Let it be said that the affectation of understanding Browning at all points is not so banal as the pretence of *not* understanding Maeterlinck. The symbol floats like a flag in his dramas.

In the interim Golaud has been wounded

while hunting. It is not serious, but it unlooses the heart of Mélisande, who confesses that she, too, is ill. With her habitual avoidance of the definite, she does not, or will not, tell her husband the cause of her vague unrest and spiritual nostalgia. The interview is affecting. Golaud, the middle-aged, cannot overhear the shell-like murmurings of this baby soul. She recounts the loss of her wedding ring, but prevaricates. Golaud bids her go search for it in company with Pelléas — always Pelléas. In a grotto the two again meet. The cave is full of "blue darks," and outside the moon has "torn through a great cloud." Suddenly three sleeping beggars are discovered (again a recurrence to the earlier style). They mean something, of course, though they do not awaken. In certain pages of Maeterlinck it is well to let sleeping symbols lie undisturbed. The action now moves apace. Pelléas, fearing danger, wishes to fly, but is dissuaded by his grandfather.

In Act III Pelléas and Mélisande sit and converse. Little Yniold, with his curious child's brain and child's candour, really discovers to the lovers their mutual love. It is done captivatingly.

"You have been weeping, little mother," he says to his mother, in his father's presence. "Do not hold the lamp under their eyes so," responds Golaud. Then follows the poetic and famous scene of Mélisande on the tower combing her unbound locks and singing in the moonlight. It is a magical picture. One recalls

Lilith, that first wife of Adam, painted by Rossetti, who also combed dangerous silken tresses. Pelléas enters, and the ensuing duologue is rich in tenderness and amorous poetry. One in vain endeavours to recall so intensely vivid a scene in literature since Romeo and Juliet. The romance of the French Romantics always verged on the melodramatic and artificial, and the stately classics are not happy in moments of this kind. The similar scene in Cyrano, when compared to Pelléas and Mélisande, is mere rococo pasteboard, though theatrically effective. Rostand is, at his best, Orientally sentimental, as befits his blood; he is never truly poetic, for he is a winning rhetorician, a "rhyming Sardou," rather than a dramatic poet.

The mad apostrophe to the hair of Mélisande is in key with the entire setting of this moving tableau. "I have never seen such hair as thine, Mélisande. I see the sky no longer through thy locks. . . . They are alive like birds in my hands." Even the surprising of the lovers by the sleepless husband has nothing theatric in it. He tells them that they are children — "what children!" — and bids Mélisande not to lean so far out of her window. In the next scene we see him with Pelléas in the vaults of the castle. There is something evil in his heart; in the brain of Maeterlinck there was Poe when he wrote this episode. Golaud leads Pelléas through the vault. Pelléas almost stumbles into an abyss — his brother has made a misstep. We feel our-

selves listening here on the brink of a catastrophe that does not happen. It recalls Poe's Cask of Amontillado.

A painful scene is the questioning of little Yniold by his father. He asked the boy what Mélisande and Pelléas talked of when together; asked of their movements. Then he lifts his son to the window and bids him look on and report. It is masterly in its cruel directness. "Are they near each other?" he demands. "No, little father." Other even more searching questions follow, and when the unfortunate spy is clutched in a fierce grip he cries, "Ah, ah! little father, you have hurt me." Unconsciously Golaud has betrayed his woful agitation.

Mélisande is pitied by Arkël. She replies that she is not unhappy. He responds, "Perhaps you are of those who are unhappy without knowing it." Golaud enters and reproaches her, seizes her hair. Her consternation is great. She gives vent to that sentence which in England convulsed a matter-of-fact audience. "I am not happy. I am not happy!" The foredoomed lovers meet in the park. It is the great scene of the piece. Again one must go to Tristan and Isolde, for the lyric passion has the quality of intense music; that Tristan and Pelléas, of which Jean Marnold wrote so acutely in the *Mercure de France*:—

Tristan est l'œuvre maîtresse du musicien Wagner. C'est le défi de son génie au temps. Il eût pu disparaître après sans craindre l'oubli ou diminuer sa gloire. Mais ce

type idéal du drame wagnérien, de l'aveu même du réformateur, ce modèle de l'œuvre d'art de l'avenir apparaît quasiment impossible au théâtre. S'il y assomme les dévots de l'opéra conventionnel, son poème ahurit, lasse ou blesse les réceptivités plus exigeantes. Nous savons, depuis Pelléas, que la vraie vie n'est pas forcément incompatible avec la scène lyrique ; qu'un drame poignant y peut s'enrober de quelque symbole et s'atourner de romantisme, sans cesser d'être humain. Nous y vîmes une action simple emplir une soirée sans chevilles, des amants s'énoncer sans boursouflure, s'aimer sans philtre et sans charades, et mourir sans grandiloquence. Le pathos de Tristan vient trop tard ; si tard, qu'il semble aujourd'hui à sa place adéquate en notre Opéra toulousain.

What Claude Debussy has done with this meeting in his music drama Paris knows. Speech here in its rhapsodic rush becomes music. And it is all poetic drama of the loftiest character, dealing with material as old as Eve. The husband enters, slays his brother, and the curtain falls on Mélisande fleeing, pursued by Golaud, sword in hand.

The fifth act of this play with its depiction of agony in the stern soul of Golaud, its death of Mélisande, who dies of a broken heart, is the tragedy of souls distraught. Even on cold paper it is emotion-breeding. Arkël, as the spokesman for Fate, bids his son not to trouble the last moments of Mélisande. She has given birth to a tiny image of herself, and, quite frightened by the world she has lived in, she leaves it like a bird scared to sudden flight. She has loved, though it is not with the "guilty" love her husband supposed. He hovers over

her couch, awaiting the words that will satisfy his egotistic passion.

"She must not be disturbed," urges the venerable Arkël. "The human soul is very silent. . . . The human soul likes to depart alone. . . . It suffers so timorously. . . . But the sadness, Golaud. . . . The sadness of all we see. . . . 'Twas a little being, so quiet, so fearful, and so silent. 'Twas a poor little mysterious being like everybody." . . .

Aglavaine and Sélysette is more shadowy in its treatment than Pelléas and Mélisande, and no doubt to the lovers of the "precious" in Maeterlinck more interesting than Monna Vanna. It deals with the love of two women, Aglavaine and Sélysette, for Méléandre. The delicacy of technic displayed is almost inconceivable, and the note of irony, faint as it is, enters a new element in this spiritual duel. To be brief, Aglavaine is the mouthpiece for Maeterlinck in his Treasure of the Humble. She is an *esprit fort*, who attracts the husband of Sélysette by her beauty of soul, vigour of brain, and temperamental intensity. Poor Sélysette is crushed between the upper and nether millstone of the man and woman. They both love her devotedly, but being of the Mélisande type, in her sweet, submissive nature, she fades away until death, self-sought, comes. She has a fragrant soul, and its fragrance exhales itself on her deathbed. The dynamics of love prove too much for this creature. There is tragic pathos in her taking

off, and Maeterlinck is at his best in delineating the tower, with its crumbling walls, the wheeling birds frightened by the apparition of a falling body, and the terror and alarm of the little sister. Less, much less, fitted for theatrical representation than Pelléas and Mélisande, this drama is charged with symbolism and with rather too severe strain for its poetic build — too much intellectual freightage. It was composed after the essays, and it is because of this, perhaps, that I find Aglavaine just a trifle *doctrinaire*. There is wise and charming talk, the action *nil*. We get instead *états d'âmes*. The two women expand before our eyes; it is a rare spiritual growth, psychology in the veritable sense of that overworked word. Yet the friendship of Aglavaine slays Sélysette. There is mystery, beauty, of a high order in the play, and in some things it betrays a distinct advance upon its predecessors.

Sister Beatrice and Ardiane and Barbe Bleu are librettos for music. The first is a delightful setting of that old Dutch legend made familiar to English readers by John Davidson in his The Ballad of a Nun. There are homely pathos and mystic exaltation in Maeterlinck's interpretation of this nun, who left her convent for the love of man, only to return, decades later, wrecked in body and soul. But her absence has not been missed, for the Virgin Mary has stepped down from her niche in the hall and played the rôle of porteress disguised as the runaway.

Ardiane married Bluebeard and falls, like the rest of his wives, into the trap set for them. She defies the monster, and with the help of the peasants rescues them all from the marvellous dungeons under the castle. But she goes forth into the world alone — oh, irony of ironies! — the others do not care to be rescued. The story is told with charm and brilliancy. The author discovers himself as a *conteur* with a light, graceful, humorous touch. It is an ideal libretto — for an ideal composer. The Miracle of Saint Antony is a comedy which was first seen at Brussels, October, 1903. It is a "satire of bourgeois society," and was well received.

V

Monna Vanna was produced at the Nouveau Théâtre, Paris, May 17, 1902. In the cast were Georgette Leblanc, Jean Froment, Darmont, Lugné-Poé, and others. The drama had an immediate success and has been played over the continent. In London, which will stand any amount of coarseness, so it be forthright and brutal, a public performance was forbidden to Monna Vanna.

The action of this sombre, fascinating drama is laid at Pisa near the close of the fifteenth century. The city is beleaguered by the army of Prinzevalle sent from Florence. Within, the city has made desperate but ineffectual resistance; ammunition and food have given out.

A few hours and the city will be in the hands of the enemy, will be subject to sack, rapine, slaughter. Guido Colonna is at his wits' ends. In the first act we find him in consultation with his lieutenants. His father, Marco Colonna, scholar, virtuoso, and philosopher, has been sent to the camp of Prinzevalle. Thence he returns, and in a scene of power and suspense he informs his son of the terms set forth by the conqueror. There is but one way out of the trouble. With rage, horror, incredulity, Guido Colonna hears that if his wife, the high-born beauty, Giovanna (Monna Vanna), goes to the tent of the barbarian captain, Prinzevalle, the siege will be terminated.

His Vanna? Why? Who is this demon out of the nethermost hell that can formulate such a vile condition? The father calmly explains. Prinzevalle is not a barbarian, but a Hercules in strength and beauty. He is cultivated. He has never seen Vanna. He desires the unknown. He has the thirst for the infinite which characterizes great dreamers, poets, generals, madmen of the ideal. If Monna Vanna is sent to his tent, a living sacrifice, in return he will give bread, meat, wine, gunpowder, arms, to the starving, vanquished city. Guido laughs at such an insane offer. Marco tells him that the city council knows of it—that—yes, Vanna has heard it. She is at that moment coming to speak to her husband. He is stupefied to learn that the council has spurned the offer. But Vanna has to be counted with.

Her decision that, Judith-like, she will go forth to this Holophernes, maddens her husband beyond endurance. In an exciting scene he accuses her of knowing Prinzevalle, of being unfaithful to her marriage vows in thought. He loads his father with opprobrium. The curtain falls on Vanna as she leaves, Guido telling her that she will never return to him the same.

Act II: Tent of Prinzevalle. We have admirable opportunities to study the man's character, virile, upright, fearless, poetic, melancholy, through his interviews with his faithful secretary and Trivulzio, the emissary of the Florentine government. The siege has lasted too long; Prinzevalle has waxed too powerful, a conspiracy has been formed against him. He is to be deposed, assassinated. He finds all this in his conversation with the lying, base Trivulzio. The episode has an antique quality. Trivulzio attempts an attack, but is easily repulsed, though he receives a slight wound in the face, warning Prinzevalle meanwhile that by daybreak he will be deposed, ruined. There is nothing left then but the improbable acceptance by Guido Colonna and his virtuous spouse of the hard condition he has imposed upon them.

She approaches. She has been saluted by the sentries. Prinzevalle is amazed. She is enveloped in a long cloak — beneath it she is a Lady Godiva. The meeting is one of the most curious in dramatic literature. Gustave Flau-

bert had anticipated it in Salammbô, but the daughter of Hamilcar was a barbarian, after all, and Mâtho's love for her brutal. The souls of Maeterlinck's pair are set before us with clearness, force, and solemnity. The aptitude for dissection of motive displayed by the poet in his previous work is revealed here with splendid results. It is all natural — as natural as such a situation can be — and the dismay of the noble woman is mitigated somewhat when she discovers Prinzevalle has known her, has always loved her, that he means her no harm. By degrees she extorts the truth from him.

He is the playmate of her happiest hours; for her he has moved mountains. Fresh from the insulting insinuations of her husband, her head aflame with her exalted mission, she begins to see her life as it really is. No, she does not precipitate herself into his arms! The transition is infinitely more subtle than could be accomplished by most modern playwrights. It is atmospheric. The dialogue leads us through the avenues of this strangely reunited couple. *He* is all passion and tenderness. *She* — curiosity has given way to remembrance. At the end he goes to Pisa with her, her captive; while radiant, unharmed, she hastes to her husband and fellow-countrymen. The promised stores have been sent; Prinzevalle deserts the cause of Florence — he is not a Florentine, and as his life is in danger his defection may be pardoned. And he loves. Stella Hohenfels in this scene

quite surpassed herself at the Hofburg Theatre, Vienna, where I witnessed a capital performance of the play in 1903, with Joseph Kainz, Reimers, and others in the cast.

Daring as is this act, the next outgenerals it in surprises. Vanna marches through the rejoicing city, lighted as for a feast. She is conducted as a conqueror to her husband. Then begins the struggle. He repulses her, heaping upon her vile phrases. Yes, she has saved Pisa, but how? Where is the honour of the Colonna? She implores, explains, denies, affirms. But when Guido learns the name of the silent warrior who has accompanied her, his rage is boundless. It is her lover that she hales back as a slave to show her triumph. There is enough meat in this act to furnish forth a gross of modern nerveless, boneless, bloodless abortions of drama now before the footlights. As a specimen of the romantic drama with the accompaniment of a profound psychology, Monna Vanna makes modern French works of the papier-maché type droop like fresh flowers in a thunderstorm.

Incredulously the infuriated husband hears that Prinzevalle has made no advances to Vanna. It is too much. Why, then, is he here? he demands. He claims the head of Prinzevalle. Vanna jumps into the mob of soldiers, crying that she has lied, lied abominably. Prinzevalle seized her, she declares, and to defend herself she has wounded him. Behold his face — which

shows the marks of his struggle with the Florentine emissary, Trevulzio.

It is a striking situation. In the heyday of his glory Sardou never devised anything more theatrically effective — setting aside consideration of the psychologic imbroglio. Vanna then claims Prinzevalle as her spoils of war. To the victor belongs the vanquished. Colonna, despite Prinzevalle's assertion that Vanna's lie is another lie, is handed over to the care of Vanna's people. In a swift "aside" she commands silence. She loves him, she whispers. Marco understands — understands the manner in which Vanna will be revenged upon Prinzevalle and also upon her husband for his disbelief. The latter now disclaims his former doubts. Let her work her vengeance upon the man she has captured. But for her all that has gone before in her entire life is as a bad dream. The real, the beautiful life, the dream, is at hand. It will be her revenge. She must go at once to her prisoner, to Prinzevalle in his cell — the curtain falls.

There are weak spots in the scheme which tax one's credulity. Something of the improbable must be granted a dramatist be he never so logical. The rapid mental change of Vanna hints at a nature naturally casuistical, as were no doubt many Italians of the Renascence. Her love for Colonna could never have been deep-rooted. But she did not betray him, and yet she has been adjudged profoundly immoral

— in a word, not to put too fine an edge upon the sophistries of the situation, this heroine committed an imaginative infidelity as well as telling a falsehood. The madness of the finale is but the logical outcome of her love for Prinzevalle. Few plays, however, reveal their complete essence in the mere reading. And the cryptic stammering, the arrested spasms, of Maeterlinck's earlier style vanish quite in the action of Monna Vanna.

I have dwelt perhaps to lengths upon the spiritual development of the man, — those who run may follow his material progress, — but the reason is simple: the soul of Maeterlinck is in his plays. That he is a creative thinker is not asserted. He has studied deeply the wisdom of the ancients, of the moderns. He knows Emerson and Molière. He knows Saint Teresa and John of the Cross. Conceive an artistic temperament that seeks the phrase for itself as did Walter Pater; that loves the soul of humanity as did Robert Browning; that seeks a dramatic synthesis for his poetry, philosophy, rhetoric — and you have this man. His Flemish *fond* may account for his mystic temperament, for his preoccupation with things of the spirit, and yet how difficult it is to place the critical finger on this quality and that quality, as if on the bumps of the phrenologist, and say — here is the real Maurice Maeterlinck!

VI

Passers-by on the Boulevard, the summer of 1903, stared at the Gymnase Theatre, which bore the inscription: Le Théâtre Maeterlinck. Certainly such an institution as the Maeterlinck Theatre was undreamed of a decade ago by the poet's most fanatical adherents.

However, there it stood, this *affiche;* and there it stood the night I stumbled through the semi-obscurity of the well-known house to my *loge.* The criticisms of the new play had not been reassuring; a second Monna Vanna was not to be expected; a return to Maeterlinck's earlier manner was unthinkable, so I confess that I awaited the parting of the curtains with a fair amount of curiosity. I was not disappointed when the first scene disclosed a *loggia* of a Renascence *palazzo.* This setting sounded the keynote — and a very beautiful, delicate note it was, for the author has been as careful in the mounting of this play as he was indifferent in his first essays. Signor Rovescalli of Milan had carried out the designs of Charles Doudelet with fidelity and taste. The Pinturicchio costumes are all from the same hands. Nothing — except the lighting — has been omitted that might add to the incarnation of this dream — for a dream play Joyzelle is, full of strange hypnotic action and phrases that haunt.

The piece, which is called a Conte d'Amour, is in five short acts. It is confined to four char-

acters, two of which carry the slight thread of story. In style it is midway between Maeterlinck's earlier manner and Monna Vanna. It might, if considered in historic sequence, have been written before Monna Vanna, and thus could have furnished the link between the static and the dynamic theatre of this poet. Coming after the Italian tragedy of hot blood, it seems like a casting back to an earlier manner. But it is not. There is more action than in any play, — Vanna excepted, — more than in Pelléas and Mélisande. There are passion and climax that come perilously nearer theatricalism than anything Maeterlinck has yet written, though he steers around the banal, avoiding it by a hair-breadth. Admirers of the dramatist's repressed style must have taken a deep breath as the episode of the attempted assassination developed into something quite unexpected.

Joyzelle is little more than a series of situations, in which the heroine is tested by the stern old enchanter Merlin. When I called upon the poet at his picturesque little house in Passy, I asked him about The Tempest, which the critics one and all saw in his play. He smiled and replied that Shakespeare was a good point of departure. Could there be a better one? The resemblance is rather superficial. Prospero and Miranda are, in the mysterious island of Maeterlinck, Merlin and Lanceor — the latter the magician's son; and Joyzelle is, if you will, a female Ferdinand come to woo the youth.

The changes to be rung on such a theme are not a few. But Maeterlinck has elected to introduce a new and more disturbing element. It is Arielle, the subconscious nature of Merlin, who always warns him of impending danger. Instead of the old-fashioned soliloquy, we are given, because of this dualism, dialogues between Merlin and his subliminal self. This sounds terribly metaphysical, but as treated by Maeterlinck Merlin's *alter ego* — his *doppelgänger*, as the German mystics have it — is a charming young woman attired in gray and purple, minor in key. If she is his constant mentor, he has also the power of projecting her into the visible world — materializing, the spiritualists call it; and as Klingsor tempted Parsifal by transforming Kundry into a seductive shape, so Merlin uses Arielle as an agent of temptation against his son, his weak and handsome Lanceor.

The plot is slight. Love, a very passionate, earthly love, is the theme. Doubtless Maeterlinck intends the entire *conte* as a symbol; theatre-goers will be more interested in its external garb. Briefly, Merlin interrogates the sleeping Arielle and learns that his son Lanceor, who has just arrived on the island, is at the crisis of his life. "Le destin de ton fils est inscrit tout entier dans un cercle d'amour." He is condemned by the Fates to die within the month if he does not find a perfect love, and to this love all is permitted, even crime. If the girl upon whom he casts his eyes will sacrifice

all for her love, then happiness will be his portion. We are plunged into a fairy land at the first words of Merlin. This gift of evoking an atmosphere in a few phrases is Maeterlinck's own. All resemblance to Shakespeare's folk vanishes as the scheme is unfolded. At first we see Merlin addressing Arielle. When she sleeps he loses his force and so he awakens her. After learning Lanceor's destiny, he resolves to be on his guard. Joyzelle is cast up by the sea, and, encountering Lanceor, the inflammable pair fall madly in love with each other. Nothing can come between, or if any one does — ! Lanceor is more assured than Joyzelle that this is his first, his perfect passion. But Merlin, who pretends anger, as does Prospero, resolves to test the newly kindled flame. He threatens to kill Joyzelle if she meets Lanceor, but she defies him, and refuses to bind herself to any promise imposed upon her. To a sonorous and emphatic *Non !* the curtain intervenes.

Merlin now devises a series of tests for his son. Like Marco Colonna in Monna Vanna, he would be cruel only to be kind. The first is the trial by separation. In a lonely tower Lanceor is found by Joyzelle. The place is as forbidding as the country of Browning's Childe Roland. Joyzelle calls to Lanceor, who rushes to her arms. As they embrace each other, trees put on full bloom, flowers carpet the ground, and all nature bursts into life — only the order of decay and bloom is reversed.

Then Merlin has Lanceor bitten by a serpent, and falling into a magic slumber Arielle appears, and he finds her instead of Joyzelle, who has been sternly sent away. She returns only to find her lover desperately enamoured of a strange woman. Even this does not shake her faith. She refuses to believe the treachery of Lanceor. After Arielle has departed, in a scene of singular power he drives forth his patient Griselidis. It is almost brutal in its intensity.

In Act III Arielle bids Merlin leave Lanceor and seize Joyzelle for himself, — a genuine subconscious suggestion this! In the security of her wonderful love he may find safety from that Viviane, who later saps his soul in the old-world wood of Broceliande. Joyzelle is proof against the most insidious temptations, and in the trial by faith she emerges triumphantly. Merlin suddenly commands her to look around, and she will see Lanceor held captive in the arms of another. She moves away without turning her head, thus averting the fate of a second Lot's wife. The spectator, drugged by this time, begins to wonder if this paragon has an Achilles heel. Merlin is quite as envious, for in the next trial he causes Lanceor — poor Lanceor! — to be brought nigh death's door, and Joyzelle, rendered desperate, throws herself at the cruel parent's feet. She promises to fulfil any condition he may see fit in his caprice to impose. Impose one he does. If Lanceor is restored to health, will she become Merlin's bride

instead of the son's? This, it must be admitted, is a very ingenious form of torture, and yet, when in the bigness of her soul Joyzelle acquiesces, we feel that another bead has been touched in this rosary of pain.

How to extricate the girl from her grave position? Lanceor's good looks have been spoiled by his illness — a mere trifle for this insatiable creature. In the last act Merlin lies sleeping, Arielle on guard. Joyzelle approaches, her face set in despair, yet firm in her purpose to fulfil her destiny. She has promised. Lanceor has been saved. She will pay. As she reaches the couch of the magician she plucks forth a dagger and would have bloody murder. This is the supreme test — rather a disquieting doctrine to the passivists and gentle persons who feed on Maeterlinck's balmy philosophies. Love that does not flinch at crime is the keystone to this little arch of a play. Merlin is satisfied. Joyzelle has undergone his tests. She is the perfect woman for Lanceor's perfect love. The two are united, and the lovely landscape fades from our view like the misty pictures in a Chopin Ballade.

Ideal love is the motive of this new play, love that will march to the jaws of hell, if needs be, for the beloved one; Orpheus and Eurydice, Hero and Leander, or any other enamoured couple come to your memory as the ingenuous Joyzelle, who has not a faint trace of humour in her, proceeds gravely to the unpleasant tasks set her by Merlin. I could not help recalling that Princess

Istar, — set to music by d'Indy, — who goes down into Hades and at each of its seven gates casts away a part of her belongings. At the seventh and last gate she has remaining only her nakedness. Maeterlinck removes leaf after leaf from the flower-like soul of Joyzelle until its very core is reached.

While she bears a sisterly resemblance to many of his naïve infantile women, she is nearer related to Monna Vanna in her affirmative nature. She is very full-blooded for a dream maiden, and at times she showed something of Sardou's tigress-like creatures. Possibly one received this impression because Georgette Leblanc, who originated the title rôle, has evidently been a close student of Sarah Bernhardt's methods. As is the case with modern *feministe* writers — were there ever ancient ones? — the woman is enthroned, she is the Eternal Womanly, and she has the final word in the destiny of things, as in Goethe's poem. Lanceor does not appear in an undesirable light, while Merlin represents Wisdom and makes very Maeterlinckian speeches. His final words are full of the sober dignity we expect from the author of Wisdom and Destiny.

In Joyzelle the words count for something, no matter what the author intends them to convey by the "second intention." He once wrote "Les hommes ont je ne sais quelle peur étrange de la beauté." This strange fear the young Belgian Merlin evokes of his own accord. We

sense the beauty, but are uncomfortable in its presence. Human beings or semi-humans must act to reveal themselves. This they do in Joyzelle. There can be no reproach here of the abuse of the "static," only the action and words — couched in harmonious prose — do not quite summon reality to us.

The disembodied thoughts of the poet are given a local habitation and a name, and still they remain thoughts, abstractions; they are not of our flesh and blood, but seem to inhabit that "Third Kingdom" Ibsen has foretold. More "interior" than Monna Vanna, Joyzelle is hardly apt to be appreciated. I feel quite sure that many of the adjectives lavished upon it by the Parisian press were not sincere. As a race the French cannot be in sympathy with the gray, slow, poetic images of this Belgian mystic.

I had read Walkley's capital book on Dramatic Criticism, and after the performance of Joyzelle I opened its pages and saw this: "So, says Coleridge, stage presentations are to produce a sort of temporary half faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is. Thus the true stage illusion as to a forest scene consists — not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest."

Joyzelle, then, would be the negation of the drama did we not allow for Coleridge's "remis-

sion." If we can shut our eyes to the pure idealism of Arielle, and see, as the poet intends us to do, a little love tale, our enjoyment would be materially heightened. Theories hamper; so does criticism. And the unhappiest critic of the drama is he who approaches his author consciously. As in music, so in much of the Maeterlinckian drama, nothing happens, and if we could be content to abandon ourselves on the waves of the dramatist's fantasy, our pleasure would be tenfold enhanced. This is the attitude in which one receives music. Why not adopt its receptivity in Maeterlinck's case? for his plays are as near the inarticulateness of music as they dare to be and still retain sober lineaments.

The performance was a delight throughout. Every person in the cast is an artist, and as Joyzelle I had an excellent opportunity to study the personality and art of Georgette Leblanc, — now Mme. Maeterlinck, — for whom Monna Vanna was written. A versatile woman, Leblanc was originally in opera. She has sung Thaïs, Sapho, Navarraise, Carmen, Françoise in L'Attaque au Moulin, the Bruneau-Zola music drama, and has played over Europe with unbounded success Charlotte Corday and Monna Vanna. As an interpreter of the *lieder* literature of Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, and the new Frenchmen and Belgians, Gabriel Fauré, d'Indy, Claude Debussy, Georgette Leblanc has also won praise. And her voice was never a great one. She has sung

by the grace of God, as our German brethren say, and as a *diseuse* she has won more success than as a singer. She is distinctly a personality. Her hair is wonderfully red, the mask of her face a peculiarly expressive one. You recall those old portraits by the masters, of some unknown woman, whose eyes follow you from the canvas, eyes that peer beneath tumbled tresses, surmounted by an imperial Gainsborough hat of velvet. She is given to the picturesque in daily life, and has written a clever volume of essays all her own in style and idea.

As an actress, I should say that Leblanc was halfway in her methods between Sarah Bernhardt and — Georgette Leblanc. She has great facility of speech, is plastic in her poses, indulges in those serpentine, undulating movements we have long since recognized as Sarah's own. Do not mistake; Mme. Leblanc has a pronounced individuality. She is herself. Her intonations are her own. But she has such velocity and clarity of diction, has such temperamental energy, plays a rôle with such swiftness, that Bernhardt is inevitably suggested. As Monna Vanna she is more successful than as Joyzelle. The abundant nervous energy of the woman ill brooks long periods of repose, and Joyzelle is more like a Burne-Jones maiden than the fiery lover of Prinzevalle. Leblanc was intense in all the climaxes, and her denotements of joy, love, hatred, and overwhelming desolation were alike admirable. She has expressive

features, though they are irregular — few women would call her good-looking. (Note the discrimination of sex!) She nevertheless made a charming Joyzelle, and spoke her husband's cadenced lines with the exact feeling for their exquisite rhythms.

VII

Experience of a saddening sort taught me that a man and his works are twain; that a poet never looks like a poet; a composer is seldom harmonious in private life. Yet I could not be but tempted when a brief, courteous note from the author of Monna Vanna informed me that he would give me an evening hour for an informal interview. Maeterlinck lives on the Rue Reynouard in a small house, the garden of which overlooks the Seine from the moderate heights of Passy. To reach his apartments I had to traverse a twisted courtyard, several mysterious staircases built on the corkscrew model, and finally was ushered into an antechamber full of screens, old engravings, fans, much ornamental brass, and reproductions of Mantegna, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other symbolistic painters.

But I was not to abide there long. A maid with doubting eyes piloted me across a narrow hallway, through a room where sat a tirewoman altering theatrical costumes — and at last I was not in M. Maeterlinck's presence. Not yet.

Down another staircase, and the great man loomed up in cycling costume, cordial, grave, a handsome fellow with big, Flemish bones, a small, round head, and wavy hair dappling at the temples. A man past forty, a gentle, pensive sort of man, Maurice Maeterlinck does not look like his photographs for the reason that they were taken nearly a decade ago. He is much older, much more vigorous, than I pictured him. The general race characteristics are Flemish or Belgian — that is, Germanic and not Gallic. This he knows well and realizes that his work must ever be exotic to the logical mind of the Frenchman, for whom the form is ever paramount to the idea.

Maeterlinck's eyes are what the French call flowers of the head. A gray blue, with hints of green, they are melancholy eyes, these, with long, dark lashes. He is extremely modest, even diffident, though touch him on his favourite theme and he responds readily. A devourer of English literature, he will not venture into conversation in our tongue, for he has had little practice. German he speaks, and he knows Italian. He told me that in composing Monna Vanna, he read Sismondi for a year so as to get historical colour. He was quite frank about the conception of this play.

"I wrote it for Mme. Maeterlinck," he remarked simply, which disposed of my theory that the piece was written to prove he knew how to make a drama on conventional lines.

Joyzelle was also written for the same actress, a woman who has played an important rôle in the poet's life. Then I brought up Browning's Luria and the opinion of Professor Phelps of Yale that Maeterlinck had profited by reading the English poet when he composed Monna Vanna. M. Maeterlinck smiled.

"Naturally I read Browning; who does not?" he said, with the naïve intonation that becomes him so well. "Luria I have known for a long time, but Luria is not a stage play;" which, coming from the author of Les Aveugles, I considered sublime. He is quite right — Monna Vanna and Luria have little in common except that the scenes of both are laid at Pisa, and that both Luria and Prinzevalle were treated badly by an ungrateful country. But then, so was Coriolanus and a host of other historical patriots. Maeterlinck spoke of Shakespeare as other men mention their deity. He knows Poe very well, and also Walt Whitman.

A study of Maeterlinck's art reveals the evolution of a mystic, the creation of a dream theatre, the master of a mystic positivism. In Edgar Quinet's romance, Merlin, we read of a visit made by the magician to Prester John at his abbey. This abbey is an astounding conglomeration of architectures — pagoda, mosque, basilica, Greek temple, synagogue, cathedral, Byzantine and Gothic chapels, turrets, minarets, and towers in bewildering array. Prester John is a venerable man with a long, white beard. "Upon his head

he wore a turban enriched with a sapphire cross At his neck hung a golden crescent, and he supported himself upon a staff after the manner of a Brahman. Three children followed him, who carried each upon the breast an open book. The first was the collection of the Vedas, the second was the Bible, the third the Koran. At certain moments Prester John stopped and read a few lines from one of the sacred volumes; after which he continued his walk, his eyes fixed upon the stars."

Maurice Maeterlinck recalls this type of eclectic culture. Eclectic is his taste in creeds and cultures. And in this he is the true man of the twentieth century, summing up in himself the depths and shallows, virtues and defects, of cultured eclecticism.

The greater part of the foregoing essays, now completely revised, first appeared in the columns of the New York *Sun* at the time the author was dramatic editor of that journal. He wishes to acknowledge here the courtesy of William M. Laffan, Esq., in the matter of their republication.

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